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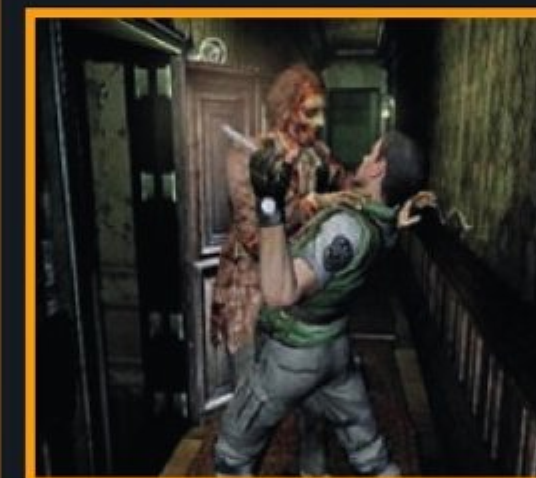
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BEHIND THE SCENES OF ONE OF THE PLAYSTATION'S BEST MOVIE LICENCES

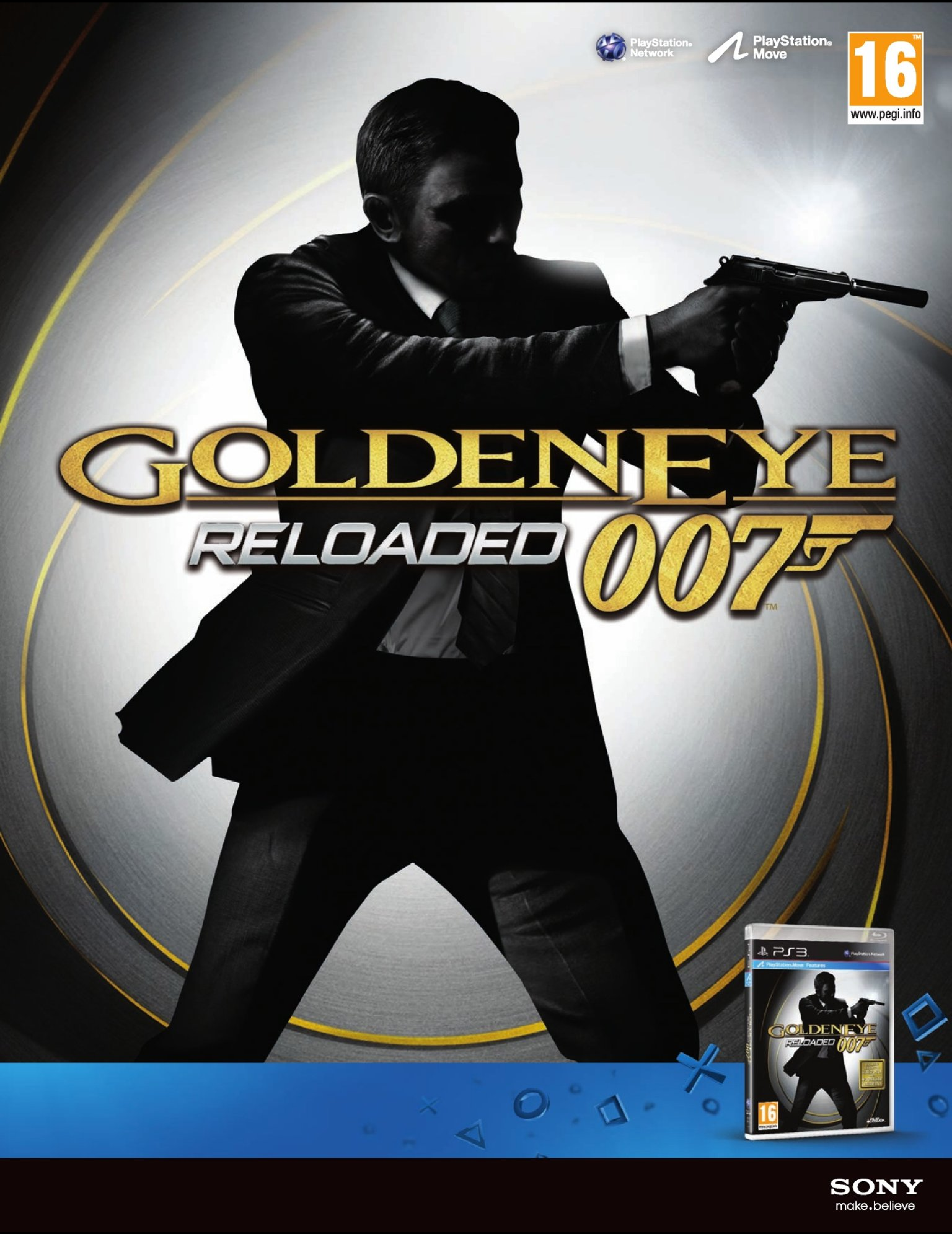
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HOW WESTWOOD'S HIT PC RTS REVOLUTIONISED A GENRE

**GARY PENN**
"WE HAD THIS PERCEPTION WE'D BE SITTING AROUND PLAYING GAMES"

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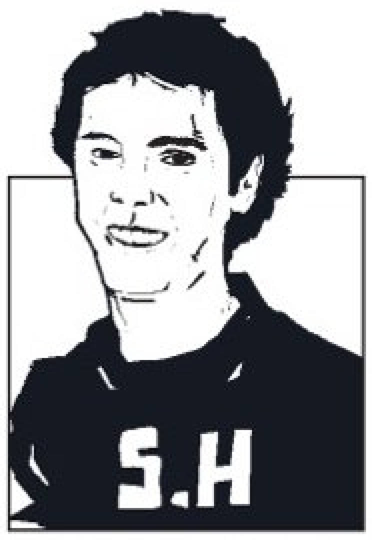
# THE RETROBATES

FAVOURITE RESIDENT EVIL GAME




## DARRAN JONES

*Resident Evil 4*, without a doubt. The first time I saw it, I actually lifted the GameCube up to look underneath it, as I couldn't believe it was actually running it.
**Expertise:**
Juggling a gorgeous wife, two beautiful girls and an award-winning magazine
**Currently playing:**
*Ico Collection*
**Favourite game of all time:**
*Strider*




## STUART HUNT

I've always loved the original. It had just the right level of horror and silliness for me. I also think the revamped GC version was superb, which in my opinion stands as one of the finest game remakes ever.
**Expertise:**
Games with flying bits in them
**Currently playing:**
*Renegade Ops*
**Favourite game of all time:**
*Renegade Ops*




## PAUL DAVIES

*Resident Evil Code: Veronica* by miles
**Expertise:**
Banging my head against a brick wall
**Currently playing:**
*Halo: Reach*
**Favourite game of all time:**
*Ghouls 'N Ghosts*




## IAIN LEE

The first one. The acting was laughable even when it came out, but it was still revolutionary.
**Expertise:**
Pretending to be an American on Xbox Live
**Currently playing:**
*Gears Of War 3*
**Favourite game of all time:**
*Elite* (the BBC Micro version)




## JASON KELK

I've only ever played the first *Resident Evil* and didn't get into it. There's something that puts me off games with limited ammunition – probably due to my 2D shoot-'em-up roots!
**Expertise:**
Homebrew hero
**Currently playing:**
*Slam Tilt* (Amiga)
**Favourite game of all time:**
*Io*




## PAUL DRURY

The original on the PlayStation. When that first corpse-munching zombie turned to look up at you, bloodied teeth and empty eyes, you knew you weren't in *Mario Land* any more…
**Expertise:**
Lloyd Mangram
**Currently playing:**
*Aztec Challenge*
**Favourite game of all time:**
*Sheep In Space*




## JOHN SZCZEPANIAK

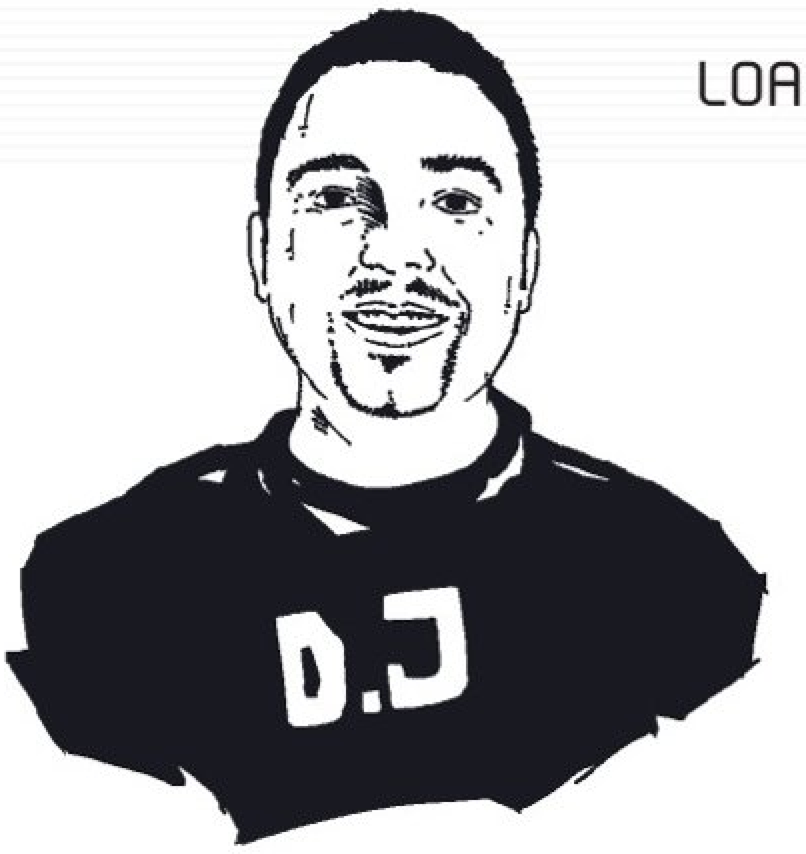
Normally I would say *Code: Veronica*, but for the beauty of the 2D and survival tension, this time I'm voting *Resident Evil Gaiden* on GBC. Also, *RE4* can sod right off. All action, no survival. Bleurgh!
**Expertise:**
Anything obscure
**Currently playing:**
*Faselei!*
**Favourite game of all time:**
*Star Control II*




## MARTYN CARROLL

The original was a revelation to me. I played it one day then blew the remainder of my student loan on a PlayStation the very next.
**Expertise:**
8-bits and bobs
**Currently playing:**
*Manhunt*
**Favourite game of all time:**
*Jet Set Willy*

# LOADING...




**I remember my first encounter with *Bubble Bobble* like it was yesterday. It was Poole arcade, long before it became the hollow fruit machine haven it is now, and it cost ten pence to play. I became so enamoured that the rest of my allowance was spent on that single game.**

That's one of the powerful things about nostalgia: you can shut your eyes, concentrate, and instantly relive precious memories of a game. Nowadays, of course, we can go one better and play those games thanks to emulation and compilations. When we're all in our 60s we'll still be able to play games like *Bubble Bobble* directly, which pleases me greatly.

Our memories aren't just synapses firing in our brains, but remain tangible things that can still be interacted with. And it's only going to improve as more and more publishers look to earn an easy buck from their back catalogues.

This last point is relevant to the many HD remakes that have started to trickle out. Some, like the *Ico* collection, are superb ports, while others, like *Resident Evil 4*, are less impressive. It's going to be interesting to see if these recent releases have stood the test of time as well as Taito's beloved franchise.

Enjoy the magazine,





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**>> Load 95** Breathing new life into classic games

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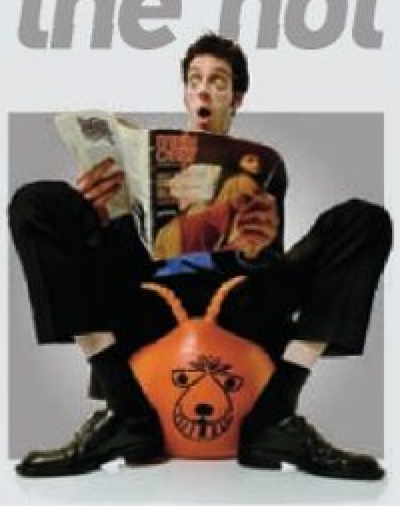
## RETRO REVIVALS








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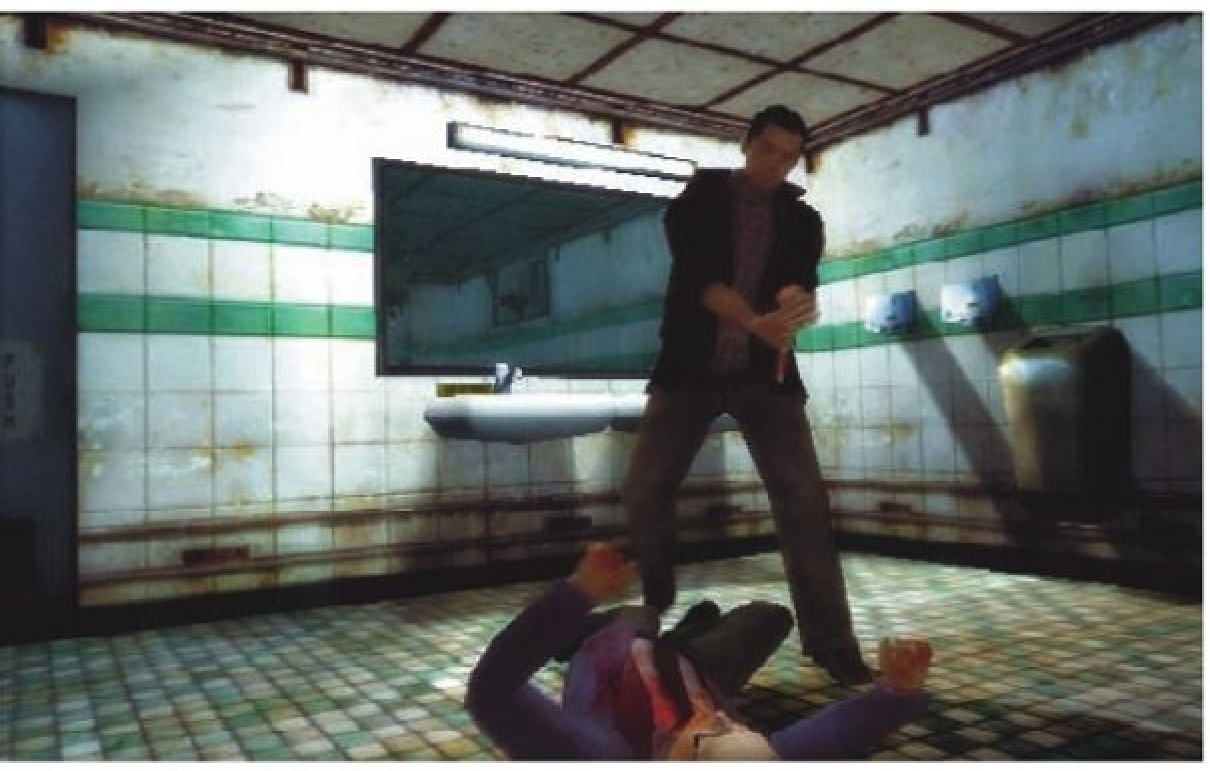
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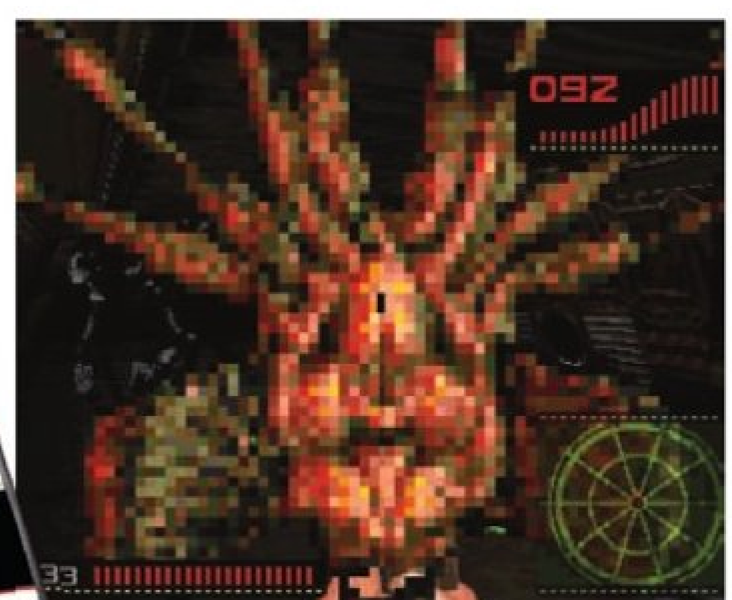
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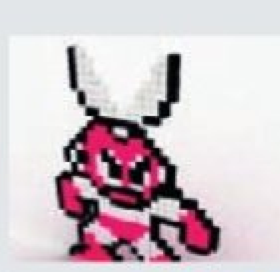
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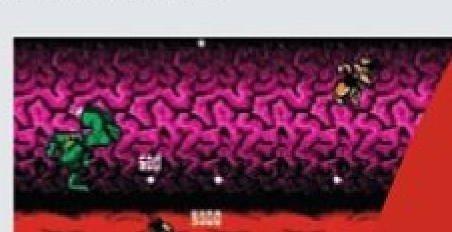
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**24 BATTLETOADS**

Retrobate old skoolrc explains why everyone should experience Rare's fun NES take on the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* franchise.





# ESSENTIALS



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# retro radar

>> GIVE US TWO MINUTES AND WE'LL GIVE YOU THE RETRO WORLD



>> Replay was easily the highlight of the retro calendar last year, so we're delighted to reveal an in-depth interview with its organisers for the upcoming November event. Time to mark the date in your calendar if you haven't done so already!

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# REPLAY EXPO RETURNS

WE FIND OUT WHAT ATTENDEES CAN EXPECT FROM THIS YEAR'S REPLAY EXPO

**Replay Expo 2010 was a storming success, drawing in a large crowd of retro enthusiasts from all around Europe. After the great response to last year's show, the expo returns and the organisers at Replay Events – Gordon Sinclair, Andy Brown and Dave Moore – are working hard to ensure that this year's event is even bigger and better. We caught up with Gordon to learn what visitors can expect at the event, which takes place on 5-6 November at the Norbreck Castle Exhibition Centre, Blackpool.**

**RG: Were you surprised by the success of last year's show?**
**Gordon Sinclair:** We were absolutely blown away by the response to last year's show. We took a big risk taking on a show of this size, but after the success of Retro Reunited the year before we had a lot of confidence. But the final result far exceeded even our own high hopes! In fact, as a direct result of the success of Replay Expo and a number of other exhibitions that we have provided for events like The Gadget Show Live and Videogame Nation, we have now created a new company, Replay Events Ltd (**www.replayevents.com**), which specialises in videogaming events management.

**RG: Do you think the easier to reach location was a factor?**
**GS:** I am not sure the people who travelled all the way from Italy, Holland, Belgium and Germany – not to mention all four home nations – would necessarily call it easy to reach! But we certainly think that holding the show in Blackpool was a factor. It is such a recognised place and has great links to gaming through its seaside arcades.

**RG: What's the biggest difference about this year's event?**
**GS:** The biggest difference is the size. Not only have we expanded into new rooms, but we have also gone back to the drawing board on the layout to make sure we can squeeze in even more consoles, computers, arcade machines and pinball tables.



» Pinball machines are always a big draw at retro events like Replay. We'll own our own one day.

**RG: What guest stars do you have lined up?**
**GS:** As always with this kind of event we are booking guests right up to the wire, so the best place to find out the latest news is on our Twitter (@ReplayEvents) and Facebook (ReplayEvents) feeds. However, we are delighted that Team17 has agreed to come along and talk about their wonderful history. Not only that, but they





» There are always plenty of competitions going on at Replay events. It's also nice just seeing a new generation enjoy classic games.

will also be running a 'beat the creator' competition on the original *Worms* in a similar style to last year's *Sensible Soccer* and *IK+* competitions. We are also expecting to have Q&A sessions with a number of key players from the world of Nineties gaming magazines, as well as artists from the 8- and 16-bit eras.

> "Team17 has agreed to come and talk about their history"

**RG: What publisher support do you have this year?**

**GS:** As with guests, publishers always go down to the wire. Last year we managed to get Sony, Nintendo, Ubisoft, Sega and others along, so we expect to bring in similar names. We will once again be supported by Gamestation, so expect to see another appearance from Master Chief in their area!

**RG: What are the highlights that you have planned for this year?**

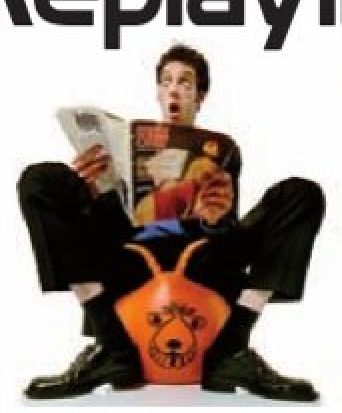
**GS:** We are really excited about the tournaments and competitions this year. We have some great support from competitive gaming communities such as Electronic Dojo and European Gaming League, so expect some serious competition. There will be plenty of competitions for the more casual gamers, too, though. I am particularly looking forward to the return of our King of *Pong* tournament. Last year saw 128 players battle it out, and our hope is to increase this to 256!

**RG: Why do you think these shows continue to be so successful?**

**GS:** There is a saying that we live by at Replay, and that is: 'Good games never die; they just get retro!' Everyone loves a bit of nostalgia, and as many of the machines get older they become harder to find. By combining the vast array of classic systems with the powerhouses of today, we are able to bring in both old and young gamers, and there is nothing more satisfying for us than to see kids come running in and head straight to the PS3 and 360 but then see them spend most of their time on the classic systems. *

# Replaying Replay?

» Just a few of the highlights from Replay Expo 2010



### Iain Lee

Television personality, radio presenter, retro games enthusiast, and **Retro Gamer** columnist Iain Lee stepped in to host last year's expo at the last minute and proved to be a popular choice with attendees. Hopefully he'll be taking to the stage again, or, at the very least, making an appearance during the weekend. We got the impression that he may return again this year, but the details were yet to be finalised. If Iain's unable to attend then we're sure whoever the chaps have lined up will be someone just as good. Who knows? Ply him with a mic and enough sauce and Darran will give anything a go…



### Let the games begin

There was certainly no shortage of things to do and see at last year's expo. As well as a fantastic collection of classic computers, games consoles, pinball machines and classic arcade machines to play, there was also a large number of tournaments and 'beat the creator' competitions running throughout the two days. These included a *Sensible Soccer* tournament; an *International Karate* competition where winner John McDermott got to face off against the game's creator, Archer Maclean; and an epic four-player *Warlords* tournament, which attracted quite a crowd.



### Stuck In D'80s

In addition to competitions and gaming there were plenty of panel discussions and Q&A sessions as legends of gaming including Jeff Minter, Archer Maclean and Gary Bracey took to the stage to field questions. The first day of the expo finished with a gig by Stuck In D'80s, the retro gaming super group made up of Jon Hare on guitar, Ben Daglish on bass and Mark Knight on fiddle. The trio performed crowd-pleasing covers of popular retro music, including *Deflektor, Monty On The Run* and *Spellbound*. Will they be returning this year? We don't know. Embarrassingly, we forgot to ask.

## THE RETRO DEBATE

### » Replay Expo 2011: are you attending?

VISIT RETROGAMER.NET/FORUM TO HAVE YOUR SAY

**daysleeper**
If everything goes as planned, I'm going to head over to Blackpool too. I was there last year with some mates and we had a great time. And to everyone who complains about the distance: we're coming from Belgium by car, so it's about 445 miles of road and some time on the ferry for us.

**WildWillyWilson**
Can't wait. Coming along with bro again and going down Friday until the Sunday.

**witchfinder**
I'm really looking forward to it, of course. This year I'm hoping to work a bit less – no organising for me this year – and play a bit more, and also meet a few more new faces and drink a bit more too.

**RetroMartin**
Not sure if I'll be making this. I'll be training during the week for my new job – in fact, I'll be 4/8 weeks down – and newly moved in with my other half, which may mean a few monetary sacrifices. Would love to come next year if possible, though!

**markopoloman**
I'll be going. Last year was fantastic – it's amazing how these events have evolved from the humble and superb Retro Fusion events set up and run by Boyo. This year's event is going to be the best yet – and you should ALL be going!

**felgekarp**
I wasn't going to go this year but I got talked into it last night.

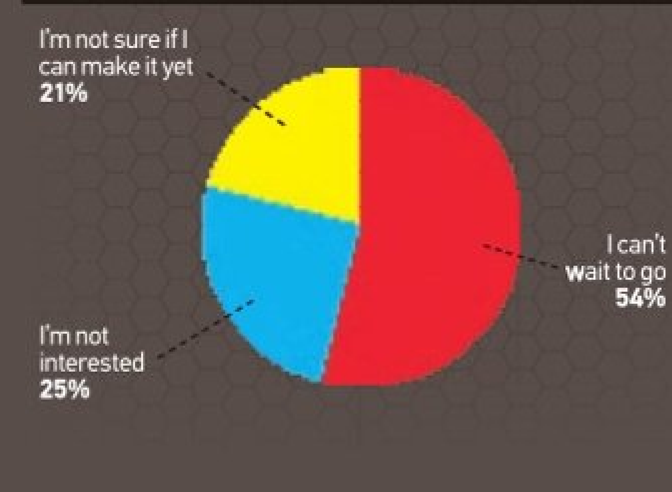
**Andy L**
Can't wait. If it's half as good as last year, I'll be chuffed!

**r0jaws**
With bells on. I'm bringing a good wedge of my systems with me too for everyone to have a go on. I can't wait.

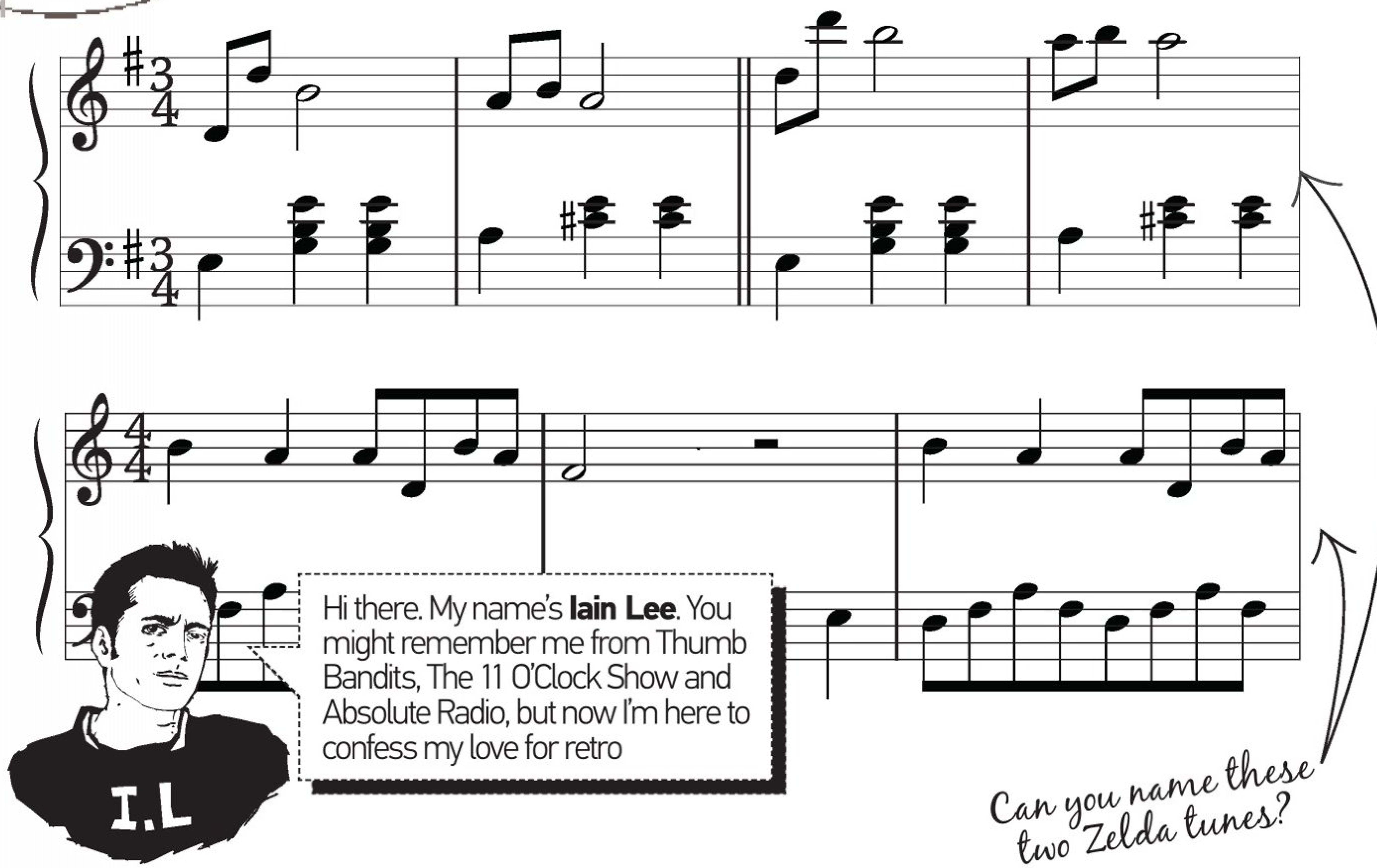
**badger2609**
I really can't wait for this year's Replay. My mate and I went to last year's show, the first retro event for me, and we were blown away by it.

### FORUM OPINION

**Are you attending Replay 2011?**



**Here's the bio...**
Iain Lee has been a fervent gamer since he was tiny. And that was a long time ago. In between playing computer games and collecting crap from eBay, he has presented Channel 4's *The 11 O'Clock Show* and *Rise*, and currently does bits of stand-up as well as presenting the *Two Hour Long Late Night Radio Show* on Absolute Radio at 11pm.




# Video Game Heroes

**I'm writing this while sat in my dressing room at the Royal Festival Hall, having stepped out of a rehearsal with the London Philharmonic Orchestra.**

I had to read that sentence five times to believe it. I have no idea how I ended up here or what I am doing. It's very rarely I admit this in public, but I am way out of my depth.

I'm here to host what is going to be an amazing night. Video Game Heroes is an evening celebrating the best music that videogames have to offer. The LPO, as I now call my new best friends, are playing a great mix, from *The Legend Of Zelda* to *Call Of Duty* – which I can hear sounding flipping awesome over the in-house speakers – and *Tetris*.

I'm here because almost 30 years ago to the day, I got into computer games. Somehow, pissing around on a Dragon 32 and *Astro Wars*, being told off by Mum for playing too much, and hanging out with Michael Hall, wishing I owned a Spectrum like his, has brought me to this moment. The journey doesn't make sense and I know, because I have been thinking about it a lot since I got this gig a few weeks ago. A gig. Is that what orchestras call these events: gigs? Probably not.

See, I don't even know what to call this bloody thing I'm doing. I am totally cacking myself.

And what to say? My first draft was full of inappropriate swears and cock gags. I was about to show it to the conductor, or sir, as I call him, when he said he wanted this to be quite serious and weighty. I fumbled around in my bag and did the, 'Oh, no. I've left the script at home. Sorry, sir. I'll send it to you tomorrow.'

So I have a hastily cobbled collection of anecdotes about having my clothes stolen while playing *World Of Warcraft* for the first and only time, and a vaguely accurate history of gaming. Is that the kind of thing that people who come to hear 90-piece orchestras want to hear?

When I started writing this article, it was going to be to tell you how amazing it is that an evening like this is taking place. That we should all applaud ourselves for sticking with an industry that is now, undeniably, an art form. That *Halo* played live by a real orchestra is just too good and even moved me. Not to tears – get a grip – but I did get that shiver down my back.

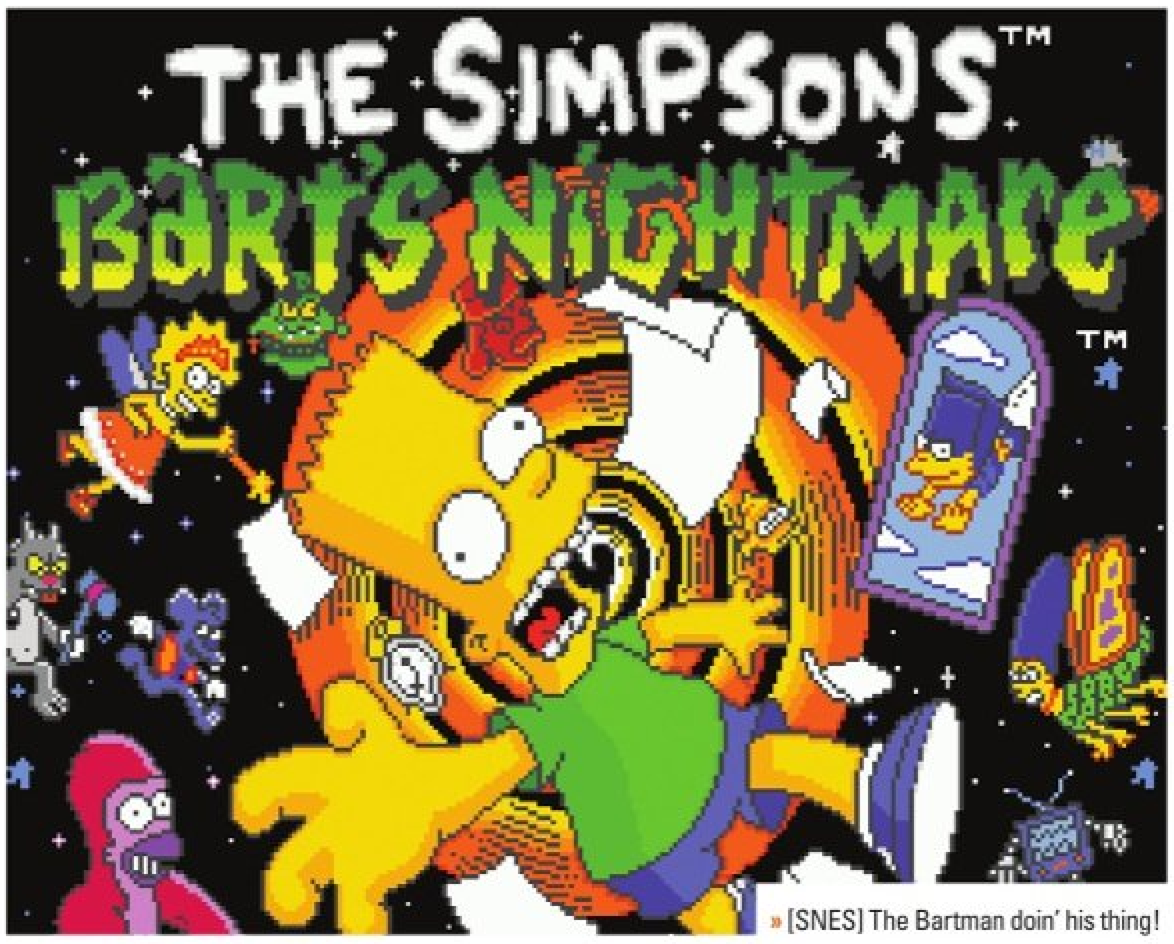
But I haven't got time to expand on any of that. Instead, I'm using this because I am scared and my wife is abroad and not answering her phone right now. I have no one to talk to, except for you lot, and while that's probably a bit sad, it's true. Thank you for that.

Right, must dash. I need another poo.

The LPO are playing a great mix, from Zelda to Call Of Duty and Tetris



» The greatest US videogame mag of all time. Don't even try to argue…



» [SNES] The Bartman doin' his thing!

# BILL KUNKEL 1950–2011

## RETRO GAMER PAYS TRIBUTE TO THE "GODFATHER OF VIDEOGAME JOURNALISM"

**One of the great lights of the industry, its initial, gleaming beacon if you will, has been extinguished. Bill 'The Game Doctor' Kunkel passed away at his home in Michigan early Sunday morning, 5 September, from an apparent heart attack. He was 61 years old at the time of his death and is survived by his wife, Laurie, and his siblings Stephanie, Karen, Joellen, Ken and Stuart.**

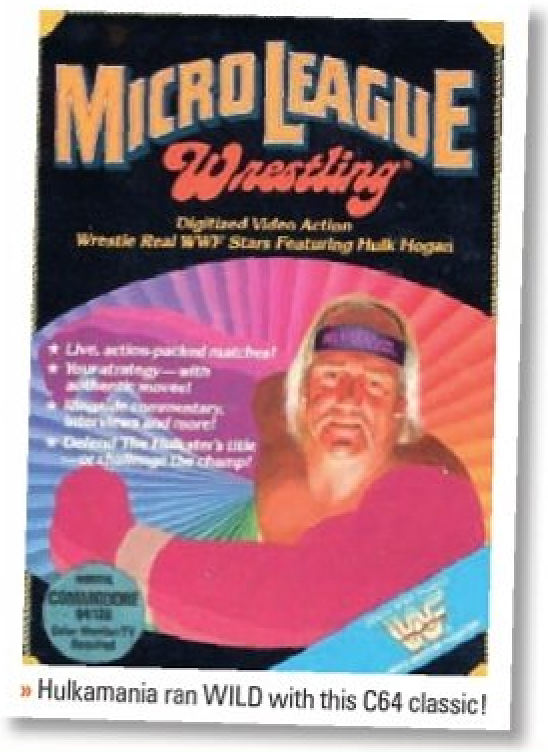
Bill's career started off humbly enough, writing and photographing for various wrestling and science fiction fanzines. He then went on to write for Marvel, DC and Harvey Comics, working on such popular characters as Spider-Man, Superman, Richie Rich and Casper the Friendly Ghost. But it was in 1978 that he found his stride with the 'Arcade Alley' recurring feature in *Video* magazine. Launching off the success of that article, Bill, along with life-long friends and business partners Arnie Katz and Joyce Worley-Katz, started the first magazine entirely devoted to videogames, *Electronic Games*. It was there that Bill took up the pseudonym of the 'Game Doctor' and invented many of the terms and concepts – such as 'screenshot', playfield' and 'Easter egg' – that we take for granted in the gaming vernacular today.

After *Electronic Games* folded in 1984, Bill, Arnie and Joyce went on to form Subway Software, consulting on such games as *MicroLeague Wrestling*, *Batman Returns* and *The Simpsons: Bart's Nightmare*. Bill himself would later join Running With Scissors and have a large role in the two *Postal* games. He also returned to comics for a stint with Platinum Studios in the late Nineties.

On top of all that, Bill provided expert testimony in several high-profile videogame-related lawsuits, including Atari v. Magnavox, Nintendo v. Galoob and Capcom v. Data East, and taught game design theory courses at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV).

No words could better sum up who Bill Kunkel was and what he stood for than the words written by Arnie Katz in the foreword to Bill's 2005 memoir, *Confessions Of The Game Doctor*: "Bill Kunkel fought for the idea that gaming could interest adults at a time when the mainstream media dismissed players as glassy-eyed pubescent joystick addicts. He has always battled for information over ignorance, truth over convenience."

With the Game Doctor's untimely demise, the videogame world has lost one of its first, true renaissance men. Anyone who has aspirations of becoming a videogame journalist or game designer would do themselves a great service by checking out Bill's seminal 'Game Doctor' pieces, his incisive 'Kunkel Report' articles and, of course, his aforementioned memoir. *



» Hulkamania ran WILD with this C64 classic!



» A fine example of Bill's early work for Marvel Comics.

## MEMORIES OF BILL KUNKEL



Bill's distinguished career touched and influenced myriad people in fields throughout all aspects of the videogame industry. These are but a few who had kind words to say about the man after learning of his death.



### >> Vince Desi, CEO, Running With Scissors

"Bill was my friend, my advisor, and a founding member of Running With Scissors; he was our editor in chief. He was truly the godfather of videogame journalism, and a true Don in the game industry. He was smart and respected, and brutally honest – something this industry and world desperately needs. Bill always liked to say, 'Life will kill you.' God bless him."



### >> Scott Mitchell Rosenberg, CEO, Platinum Studios

"Bill was a good friend and a good person. Nothing was ever too much for him to try and tackle. What he did take on he approached in a wonderful and innovative manner. He will be missed but also celebrated."



### >> Tommy Tallarico, CEO, Video Games Live

"Growing up I remember reading Bill's columns in *Electronic Games* magazine. I had the great pleasure of knowing him and being his friend for 22 years. Yo, Bill… save me a seat in heaven by the Intellivision console! Me and you in *Downhill Skiing*!"

# retro columns

>> PAUL DAVIES GIVES HIS VIEWS ON THE RETRO WORLD

**Here's my bio…**
In 1992 I started out on *Mean Machines Sega* and *Nintendo Magazine System*. In 1995 I became editor of *C&VG*. I led the *C&VG* website from 1998 until Christmas 2000, then I left journalism to be concept design manager at Criterion Games. I returned to journalism in 2002 and from 2005 I've been running my own company, Unlikely Hero.




Hello, retro gamers. My name is **Paul Davies**. I used to be the editor of C&VG and have also worked on a number of classic gaming magazines over the years



## New neighbours

**The leaping dogs and loading times were scarier than the final boss, but the first *Resident Evil* opened a creaking door to Mature-rated console games with class.**

When the PlayStation launched in 1994 it was videogame flavour. That is, *Jumping Flash*, *Ridge Racer*, *Crime Crackers* and *Tekken*. It was flashier than before, but familiar. Although *D* for the Sega Saturn was spooky beforehand, console games didn't know how to do Hollywood horror very well. And prior to *D* the best we had was *Castlevania*, with its colourful zombies and skeletal beasties. *Splatterhouse* was only good in the arcades, and the Mega Drive sequel was garbage.

*Resident Evil* was shocking because of its content, and because it was from the company last seen producing *Mega Man X2* and *Street Fighter Alpha*. It was a game that could have emerged from Western studios like Electronic Arts or Core Design, high-flying at the time, but sprung from the land of anime and manga instead. And you can only imagine that Infogrames – which became Atari and is now absorbed into Namco Bandai – has been facepalming ever since, because *Resident Evil* was really *Alone In The Dark* but without beating around the bush… or a dead-boring garden maze.

Seriously, *Resident Evil* changed so much about gaming, having jumped with both feet into chilling new waters. It drew the attention of press other than gaming magazines, in turn attracting a new breed of gaming journalist that preferred to hand in columns of academic prose instead of comedy captions. We started drawing comparisons to Hollywood, which may have rattled the cage of a certain Hideo Kojima, resulting in the loftier-than-thou *Metal Gear Solid* series.

More obvious than that, though, *Resident Evil* sparked a revolution within games development and publishing not unlike the Sex Pistols in mainstream rock and roll, basically giving studios permission to think genuinely mature and get good and gory.

We all know that *Dead Space* is *Resident Evil* meets *The Thing* or *Aliens*, right? You might also know that *Gears Of War* was named '*Resident Kill Switch*' – *Kill Switch* being the 2003 cover-and-shoot game from Namco – internally at Epic in its early days of development.

After *Resident Evil*, survival horror was officially on the cards, making a clear distinction between PlayStation gaming and what you'd usually find from Sega and Nintendo. Not all games needed to exist happily together, and as long as the BBFC gave you a 15 certificate, pretty much anything goes. Exploding heads? Fine. Not even a whimper from the tabloids and hand-wringing MPs.

Among the hall of fame moments in videogames, such as the last super-fast Space Invader, scoring 1,600 for all four ghosts in *Pac-Man*, the first boss in *R-Type* and selecting your music for *OutRun*, the first *Resident Evil* claims a big bunch of them. I don't really need to list them for **RG** experts.

What I remember most fondly about *Resident Evil* is how gamers were so forgiving about the zany save system requiring typewriter ribbons, and that we just accepted that magical storage trunks could transport shotguns across time and space to distant locations. Also, zombies don't do stairs, thank you very much, and some staircases take a couple of minutes to load.

What I mean to say is *Resident Evil* was incredible because, for all its innovations, it was only a game.

Resi was shocking because it was from the company last seen producing Mega Man X2

# LET US BE FRANK…

## COLIN STEWART EXPLAINS WHY HE'S REBOOTED ONE OF HIS OLD SPECTRUM GAMES




**After cutting his teeth on the Spectrum, Colin Stewart left the games industry. Now, 27 years later, he's back with an updated version of *Frank N Stein*. We decided to find out how the reboot came about.**

**Retro Gamer: It seems you made *Frank N Stein* and *Castle Quest* and then left the industry. What have you been up to since?**
**Colin Stewart:** I came up with a couple of follow-up games but they were never finished. Games were becoming very graphically rich and I didn't think my simpler format would be able to be a success in the market. It was very time-consuming and I also got a real job and went to university. I got an IT degree and have been a software developer ever since. I'm currently the IT development manager for a large UK PLC and still code using C#.

**RG: Can you tell us a bit about *Frank N Stein Re-Booted* and why you decided to remake the game?**
**CS:** I was contacted via my website by some ZX Spectrum forum members who had some questions about my games. I was totally unaware of the huge interest in retro gaming some 27 years on and was asked to finish my unfinished projects. To get myself back in the Spectrum groove, I thought it would be easier to remake *Frank N Stein* first. I had some levels designed that didn't make the first release, and I was always disappointed with the way the intermediate levels turned out. I wanted to put that right.



» [Spectrum] *Frank N Stein Re-Booted* fixes some of Colin's issues with the original game and adds new levels.

**RG: Has it been weird returning to working on something you made over 25 years ago?**
**CS:** Yes, totally weird. I'd forgotten most of it, but in the space of a few days and lots of reading, it all came flooding back. I've really enjoyed it actually, and I'm now totally inspired to finish off the games I started developing 27 years ago.

**RG: What's been the response to the project so far by the retro gaming community?**
**CS:** I've had loads of support, help and really positive comments from the retro community. Lots of people rate *Frank N Stein* very highly, and so the prospect of a *Re-Booted* version is generating quite a stir.

**RG: How long has it taken you to write the new game, and what new elements and enhancements can fans expect to see?**
**CS:** It's taken me about three months in total, but I only spend a few hours a week on it in my spare time. It has eight new main levels, new enemies and a new digital timer. The intermediate levels are completely different; it's now more like *Donkey Kong*, with the monster releasing multiple barrels that you have to jump over. There's also a special treat when you complete all 66 levels of the game.

**RG: Finally, we heard that you're planning to finish *Dracula*, the unreleased sequel to *Frank N Stein*. What can you tell us about that?**
**CS:** I have two unfinished games that I intend to complete: *Dracula* and *The Goblin Caves*. *Dracula* was the closest to completion and is eagerly awaited. I'd say it's probably six weeks away, and I'm really pleased with the way it's progressing. It's based in the house above the basement you see in *Frank N Stein* and uses the original graphics I designed in 1984. So watch this space… ✱







## SYNDICATE RETURNS

It's been one of the most poorly guarded secrets in gaming history, but Electronic Arts has finally confirmed that *Syndicate* will be returning in 2012. Developed by Starbreeze Studios, the brain behind *The Darkness* and *The Chronicles Of Riddick: Escape From Butcher Bay*, it's already causing controversy among fans due to its new first-person perspective. Needless to say, you can expect more information about *Syndicate*'s interesting new direction in a later issue.



# THE Vault

## TREASURES FROM THE RETRO CHEST

TREASURE OF THE MONTH




### Retro Volume 4

- **RRP:** £9.99
- **Buy it from:** www.imagineshop.co.uk

Fans of **games™**'s excellent Retro section will be pleased to hear that a brand new compilation of classic features is on sale now. **Retro Volume 4** not only features one of Oliver Frey's most stunning works on its cover but is also jammed-packed with fascinating articles.

If you enjoy learning about the creation of classic videogames then your first port of call should be the Behind The Scenes section. 17 classic games are covered, ranging from console hits such as *Conker's Bad Fur Day* and *Guardian Heroes* to PC classic like Valve's *Half-Life*.

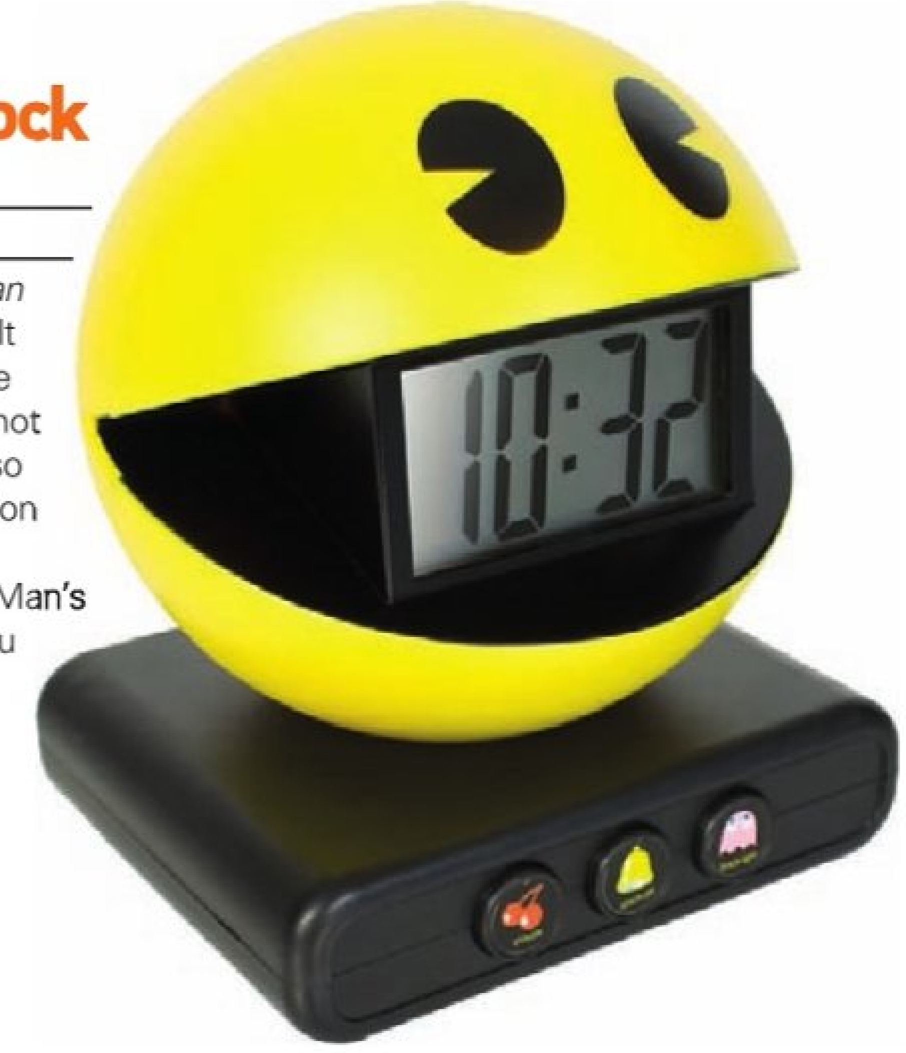
Other great articles include how Mario and Sonic made the leap from consoles to TV screens, a look back at the products Nintendo made before it ended the games industry, how computer conversions of arcade games were created, the glory years of Atari, and much, much more.

The huge 256-page bookazine is finished off with detailed looks at classic characters such as Dizzy and Mr Game & Watch, awful conversions of hit arcade games and some of the best boss encounters of all time. If you love **Retro Gamer** then this sister publication is truly indispensable.

### Pac-Man Alarm Clock

- **RRP:** £16.99
- **Buy it from:** www.amazon.co.uk

We've lost count of the cool *Pac-Man* items that we've featured in the Vault now, but here's another to add to the collection. This funky alarm clock is not only built in Pac-Man's image but also features an incredibly piercing rendition of the arcade game's start-up tune. You'll then be bombarded with Pac-Man's traditional Wacka-Wacka call until you either get out of bed and turn him off or take the batteries out.







### Zombie Food

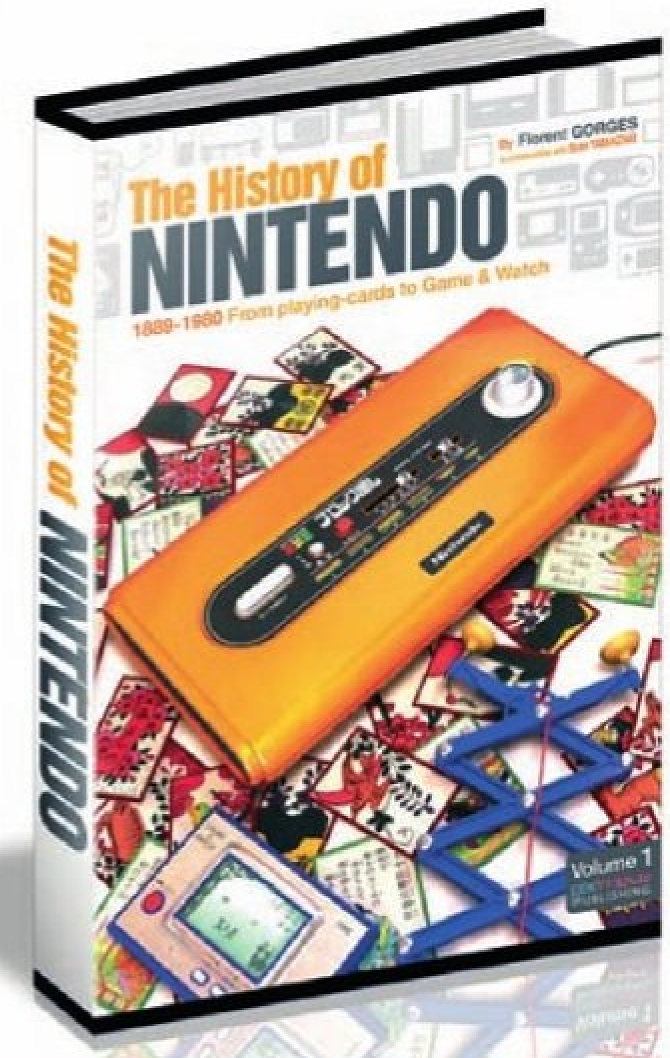
- **RRP:** £3.50
- **Buy it from:** www.planetbuzz.co.uk

Seeing as Hallowe'en is just around the corner, we thought we'd highlight these frightening novelty foods. Zombie Blood not only offers up to four hours of energy, but it's rich in protein and iron and is apparently free from zombie mutagens. It's also not an actual biohazard, despite what the packaging might suggest. Zombie Jerky, on the other hand, is teriyaki-flavoured beef jerky and looks like a zombie's stringy innards. It's the perfect thing to munch on while you're reading this month's *Resident Evil* feature.

### The History Of Nintendo: Volume 1

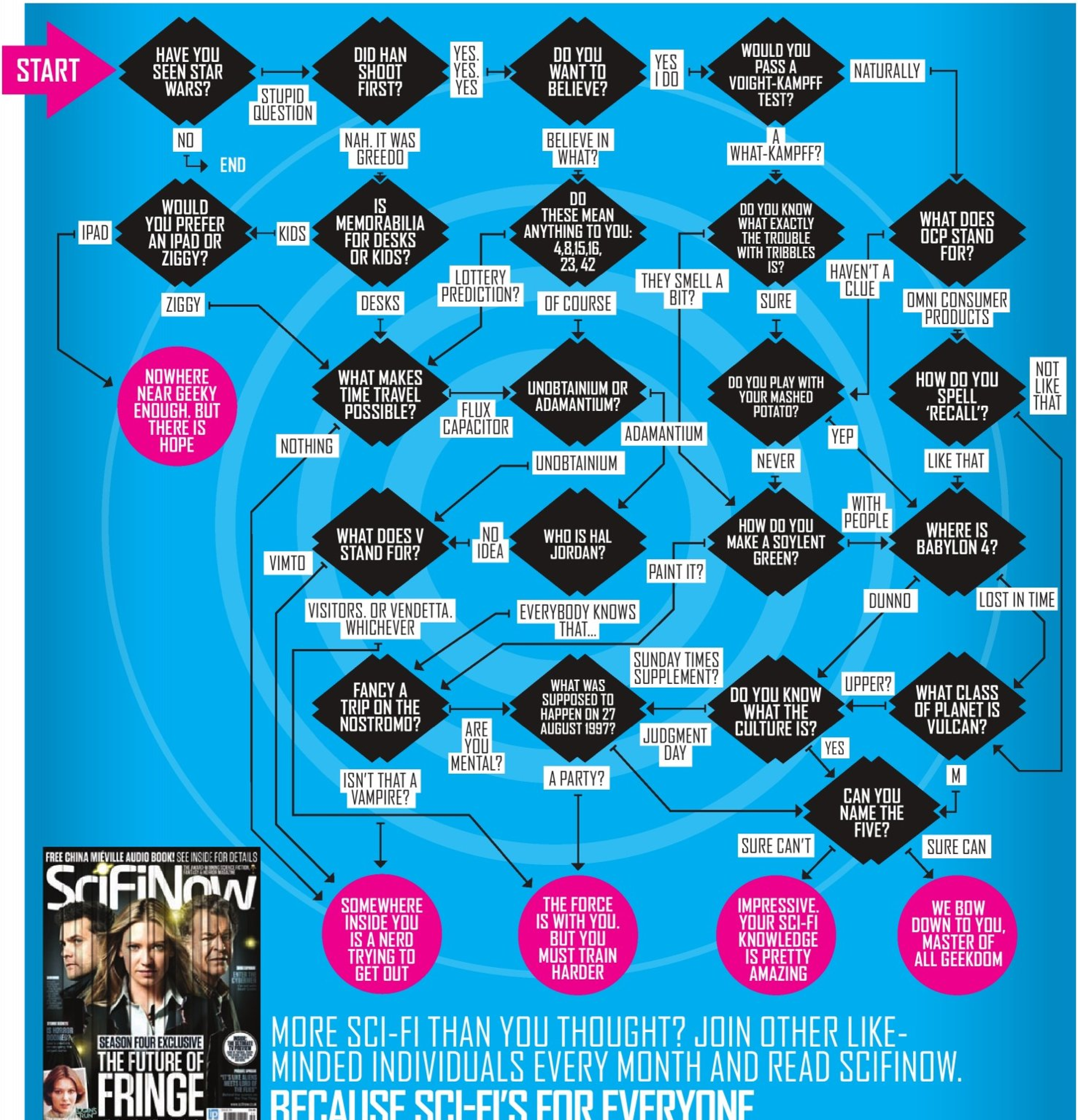
- **RRP:** 20 Euros
- **Buy it from:** www.pixnlovepublishing.com

Florent Gorges' excellent book has already been available for some time in France, but it's finally been translated into English. While rather pricey, it's an excellent look at Nintendo's early years, and covers plenty of fascinating information both about the company itself and Hiroshi Yamauchi, the president who ran the company from 1949 until 2002. In addition to featuring Nintendo's early arcade games like *Sky Skipper* and *Donkey Kong* it also features stunning imagery of early board games and Hanafuda cards. In short, it's a fascinating insight into one of gaming's most respected and successful companies, and shouldn't be missed under any circumstances.



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## *A MOMENT WITH...

# Ken Levine

In this month's 'A Moment With...', Irrational Games' Ken Levine reflects on his groundbreaking career in game design

### Who is Ken Levine?

Ken Levine originally started off in the industry in 1995, when he applied for a job at Looking Glass Studios. After working on *Thief*, he left the developer and formed Irrational Games with Jonathan Chey and Robert Fermier in 1997. They are best known for *System Shock 2* and the *BioShock* franchise.

**Which of your games would you recommend to our readers and why?**
The *Freedom Force* series is very near and dear to my heart, because there haven't been a lot of games like it. To look at the game now, it looks like a typical beat-'em-up, but really we tried to do a little more there and tell a story. It's really a love letter to comic books and, you know, I'm a huge comic fan so *Freedom Force* is a very important game to me.

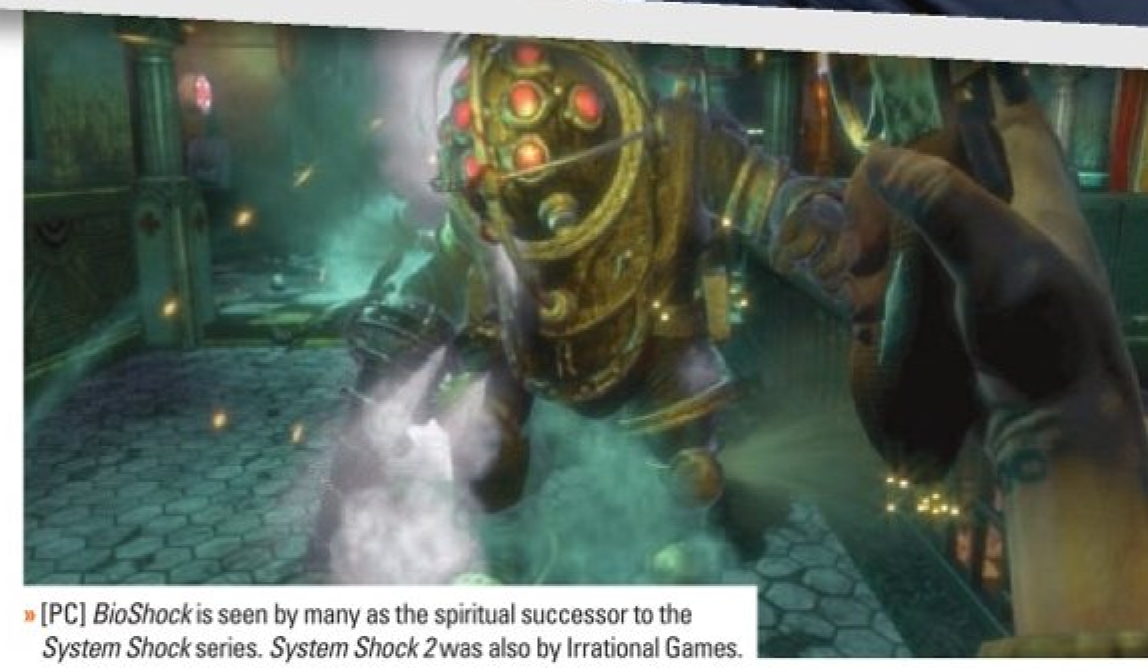
**What is the most difficult thing you've encountered working on a game?**
It's very rarely one thing. I think getting the Big Daddies and Little Sisters to work properly in *BioShock* was very, very difficult. Because, nobody had done this before and there was no model for what we were trying to do. So it was very difficult to get right. The Skylines in *BioShock Infinite* have been very tough too, very tough.

**Which industry veteran do you most admire?**
I don't think there would be an industry without Shigeru Miyamoto. I think games would have died, because of what happened when Atari started to fall apart. He just came back and brought so much creativity and so much joy to what could have become a very cynical industry, if it were not for the kind of games he was making. I think that none of us would have jobs if it weren't for him.

**How would you like your games to be remembered?**
Oh my god, you're putting me in the ground already (laughs). I like to think that we built worlds that felt strange and real, and that could be immersive. I'd like to think that people lost themselves in the worlds we made.

**Which game do you wish you'd made?**
I think *Civilization* is probably the most elegant game I've ever played. It's so bold and so broad, yet so comprehensive and simple in many ways.

**What is your darkest memory of being in the industry?**
Oh boy. I think I was really disappointed when the second *Freedom Force* didn't do very well, because we paid for that ourselves, and we spent a lot of money on it. I was so in love with the franchise and then it was like, 'My god!' That was very heartbreaking for us. I lost that money personally and we loved those characters so much, so that really hurt.



» [PC] *BioShock* is seen by many as the spiritual successor to the *System Shock* series. *System Shock 2* was also by Irrational Games.

> **"Civilization is probably the most elegant game I've ever played… it's so bold"**

**What has been your best moment?**
Probably reading the first review of *System Shock 2* in *PC Zone*. I had no idea if it would be good, or if I could even make a good game. All of a sudden it got a 95 per cent review, or something. They called it a masterpiece, and that was the first game I shipped. I was like, 'Oh! Maybe I CAN do this and not be a complete failure.' That was very exciting for me.

**How has the industry changed in the last 20 years?**
The industry encompasses so many people and so many different tastes that, when we started the industry, it was all just nerds like me. Back then, you knew exactly who you were making a game for, and they were usually always interested in the same stuff. There are just so many more people today. I mean, everybody plays games. That can make your head spin sometimes. *



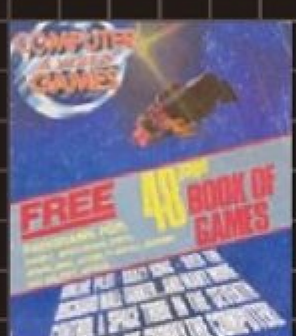

» [PC] *Freedom Force* is a fun multiplayer action game with a heavy focus on RPG mechanics.



14 October – 10 November

# retrodiary

>> A month of retro events both past and present



**14 October 1981**
■ The inaugural issue of the long-running *Computer & Video Games* magazine goes on sale in newsagents.

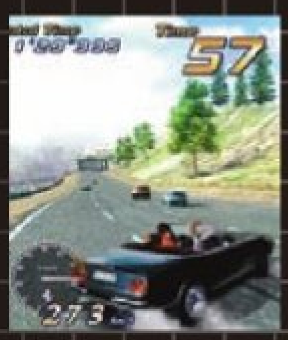
**14 October 1985**
■ Mastertronic unveils a new and slightly more expensive sub-label to its operation: MAD, or Mastertronic Added Dimension.




**17 October 1977**
■ *Combat* for the Atari 2600 is unveiled as a pack-in game for the newly released console, with its 27 variations on a theme.



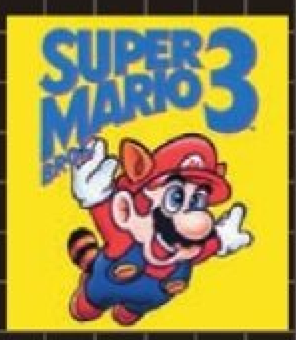

**21 October 1992**
■ Commodore releases its third Amiga machine, the 1200, in the UK. Entry-level machines start at £399.



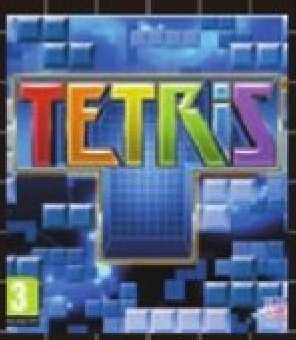
**25 October 2004**
■ The splendidly playable *OutRun 2* is released by Sega for the original Xbox.



**23 October 1994**
■ The instantly forgettable Bandai Playdia console, aimed at a younger target audience, is released exclusively in Japan.




**23 October 1988**
■ One of the bestselling videogames ever, *Super Mario Bros 3*, is released in Japan on the NES.




**21 October 2011**
■ We've lost count of the number of *Tetris* games that have been released now. This version is for the 3DS.



**28 October 2011**
■ The next chapter in Konami's ongoing survival horror game series, *Silent Hill: Downpour*, is scheduled for release in the UK on the Xbox 360 and PS3.



**28 October 2011**
■ Not content with *Downpour*, Konami is also releasing its HD versions of *Silent Hill 2* and *3*. It's going to be a scary weekend.



**28 October 2011**
■ Sega is also after your cash on the 28th with an exciting-looking PS3 update to its Wii hit, *House Of The Dead: Overkill Extended Cut*.



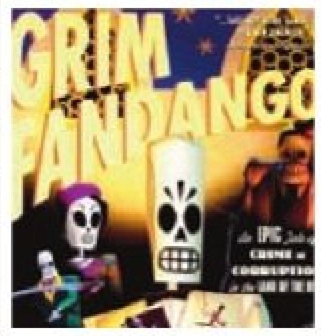
**29 October 2003**
■ The first game in the long-running and successful *Call Of Duty* series of first-person shooters is released on the PC.




**5 November 1974**
■ *Tank*, an early arcade coin-op for Atari, is released. The game features on the 2600 *Combat* cartridge.



**31 October 1997**
■ LucasArts releases the long-awaited third instalment of the *Monkey Island* series, *The Curse Of Monkey Island*, for the PC in America.




**30 October 1998**
■ The graphic adventure *Grim Fandango* is released by LucasArts on the PC. Welcome to the Land of the Dead!



**30 October 1987**
■ The PC Engine, created by Hudson Soft and NEC, hits the streets in Japan.

**5-6 November 2011**
■ The second Replay Expo 2011 will be held at the Norbreck Castle Exhibition Centre in Blackpool.




**6 November 1979**
■ Atari releases another arcade coin-op, this time the vector graphic legend that is *Asteroids*, onto an unsuspecting public.




**8 November 1995**
■ Namco releases its popular fighting game *Tekken* on the PlayStation.




**10 November 2011**
■ The new issue of **Retro Gamer** hits the streets

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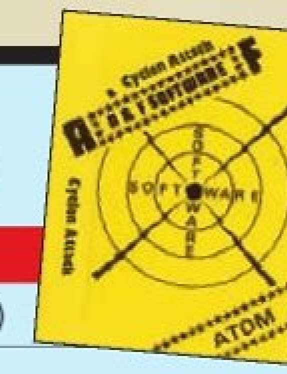
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# BACK TO THE EIGHTIES



## CHARTS



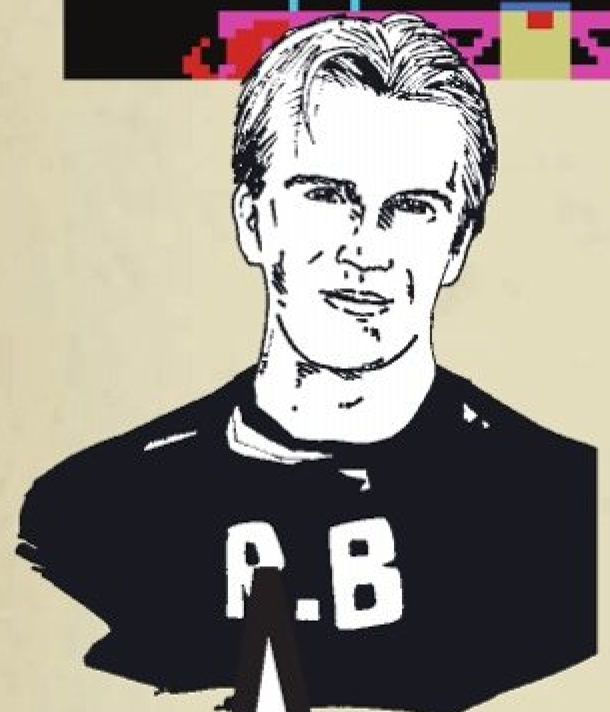

### AUGUST 1982

**ACORN ATOM**

1. Cyclon Attack (A'n'F Software)
2. Snapper (Acornsoft)
3. 747 Flight Simulation (Bug Byte)
4. Polecat (A'n'F Software)
5. Adventure (Program Power)

»[Atari 2600] If you ever fancy a few thousand copies of *E.T.*, take a trip to New Mexico and bring a big shovel…




# THE LATEST NEWS FROM AUGUST 1982

**AUGUST 1982 – ColecoVision and C64 arrive, Atari gets E.T., Activision goes Berzerk, the Dragon enters, Level 9 goes caving, there's a Space Invaders deluge and Tron hits the arcades. Richard Burton is off for a game of Paranoids…**

**This month, Commodore finally released its latest home computer, the Commodore 64. It had first been introduced to the frothing masses at the Winter Consumer Electronics Show held in Las Vegas in January 1982. Everyone who saw it was impressed at what it could do and, such was the clamour for this new machine, mass production began in earnest a few months later, after some last minute modifications. It went on sale on 9 August at the very competitive price mark of $595.**

More hardware arrived a few days later when Coleco unveiled its new console with the official launch of the ColecoVision in America. Europe saw the machine two months later when CBS Electronics began distributing it in Europe.

The ColecoVision console hit the streets boasting arcade quality graphics. A wave of twelve launch games were announced including *Lady Bug*, *Zaxxon* and the superbly playable *Donkey Kong*, which was the pack-in game for the console.

*Donkey Kong* was arguably responsible for selling many ColecoVision consoles based on the accuracy and playability of the arcade conversion. Estimates suggest that in the five months running up to Christmas, the ColecoVision shifted 500,000 units.

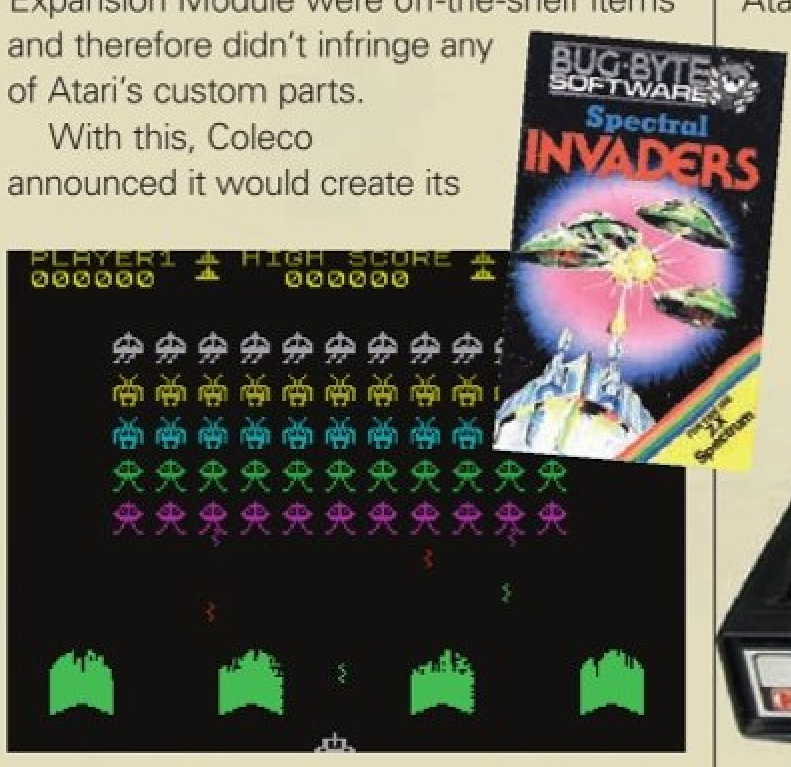
A clever move by Coleco was to also offer the first in a line of Expansion Modules. These would enable games for the hugely popular and market-leading Atari 2600 console to be played on the ColecoVision, instantly giving it a huge software base.

Atari objected profusely to the Expansion Modules, naturally claiming it infringed upon its patents, and the stench of legal action began to fill the air. However, this action backfired spectacularly when the courts found in favour of Coleco, as all the components in the creation of the Expansion Module were off-the-shelf items and therefore didn't infringe any of Atari's custom parts.

With this, Coleco announced it would create its own Atari 2600-compatible console and, within a couple of months, it had produced the Coleco Gemini. It goes without saying that Atari wasn't best pleased…

Atari did have some news of its own though. It was extremely pleased to announce that a deal had been struck late in July with Steven Spielberg and Universal Pictures for the rights to produce a videogame based on the massively successful movie, *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial*.

Having reportedly paid $25 million for the license, Atari revealed that Howard Scott Warshaw, who had designed the Atari 2600 hit *Yars' Revenge*, would be developing the game. What Atari didn't mention was that he had been given a ridiculously tight deadline to come up with the finished product – just five




»[Spectrum] It's 1982, and every other computer game released is a *Space Invaders* clone (probably).

»[ColecoVision] Coleco's new console offered some terrific arcade ports – including *Donkey Kong* as a pack-in game.












### ATARI ST

1 Pac-Man (Atari)
2 Yars' Revenge (Atari)
3 Starmaster (Activision)
4 Barnstorming (Activision)
5 Kaboom! (Activision)

### ZX81

1 Football Manager (Addictive Games)
2 Sorcerer's Castle (Mikro-Gen)
3 QS Invaders (Quicksilva)
4 Gulp (Campbell Systems)
5 Mazogs (Bug Byte)

### MUSIC

1 You'll Never Stop Me From Loving You (Sonia)
2 Back To Life (However Do You Want Me) – (Soul II Soul)
3 London Nights (London Boys)
4 Swing The Mood (Jive Bunny)
5 Song For Whoever (Beautiful South)

## AUGUST 1982 NEWS

19 August saw the Soviet Soyuz T-7 launch, the third mission to the new Salyut 7 space station. It was notable for being the mission that made Svetlana Savitskaya only the second woman in space since fellow Russian Valentina Tereshkova flew the Vostok 6 in 1963.

26 August saw the UK premiere of John Carpenter's *The Thing* starring Kurt Russell, which tells the story of a parasitic alien lifeform which infiltrates an Antarctic research post and infects anything with a pulse.



»A glass and a thin piece of card ain't going to get rid of this bug…

The researchers become more paranoid not knowing who is infected and who to trust. Meanwhile, the alien has infected a dog, leading to one of cinema's most infamous monster-morphing moments when the infected dog's face peels back and it sprouts spider-esque legs – all thanks to the special effects wizardry of Stan Winston. No CGI here, folks…

13 August saw more movie blood with the return of Jason Voorhees, the insane and deformed serial killer who stalks Camp Crystal Lake, in *Friday The 13th Part III*. Despite being just another slashfest, it did have two points of interest. It was the first movie since 1954 that Paramount Pictures had filmed in 3D, so cue lots of pointy things coming towards the audience at regular intervals. Meanwhile, it was also the first time that Jason would wear his now-trademark hockey mask, which has since become an integral part of the franchise. That's three films down, eight sequels and a reboot to go…



weeks. This would give ample time for the Atari marketing machine to do its thing in the run-up to Christmas Needless to say, we would hear a lot more about *E.T.*...

Activision released *Berzerk* this month for the 2600. The hunt-or-be-hunted maze game was a great attempt at converting the arcade coin-op. No, there was no robot speech synthesis in the 2600 version, but it was nonetheless very playable, and having to dodge Evil Otto if you dawdled too much guaranteed a jump in your pulse rate.

New out this month from Brøderbund was *Choplifter* for the Apple II: fly the helicopter, save the hostages and get back home in time for tea and crumpets (sort of). Several conversions for countless other home micros followed over the years, including a coin-op conversion by Sega, one of the few instances of an arcade game originating on a home computer.

Dragon Data released its first home micro, the Dragon 32, in mid-August, priced at £199. The new 32K, 8-bit machine was so similar to the American TRS-80 Colour Computer that a small proportion of TRS-80 software perfectly ran on it.

Dragon Data also stated its intention to release a more powerful Dragon 64, although it would be well into 1983 before that saw retail availability.

With the new Dragon 32 appearing and the existing Vic-20 and Spectrum all vying for consumer interest, it was reported that rival micros the Atari 400 and Texas TI99/4A were to have their prices slashed from £299 to £199 as competition started to hot up, such was the variety of computers that now offered both colour and sound. The soon-to-be-introduced Jupiter Ace, NewBrain and Colour Genie would mix it up even more…

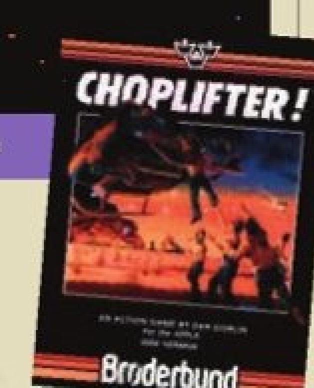
Level 9 Computing announced that its first adventure using its new custom-written interpretation language called A-Code – a highly efficient way of producing cross-platform versions of the same game – was ready for release. It was *Colossal Adventure* for the Nascom 1 and 2, an extended conversion of Will Crowther's

»Dragon 32 was created in the wilds of Port Talbot, Wales.



»[Apple II] *Choplifter* was a rarity; a home computer game ported to the arcades for a coin-op version, released three years later.






Seventies classic *Colossal Cave Adventure*.

With every software house jumping on the *Space Invaders* bandwagon by recreating its own interpretation, Quicksilva released *Space Intruders*, its first game for the Spectrum. Although lacking colour, it proved to be a hit. Meanwhile, Bug Byte released *Spectral Invaders* for the Spectrum 16K. It was more colourful and also played very nicely.

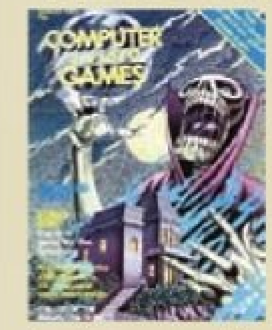
Despite the closeness of their release, both games were by far the best versions of *Space Invaders* on the Spectrum at that time, and sold extremely well.

Bug Byte had also just released its own version of Atari's *Pac-Man* – cunningly titled *Vic-Men* – for the Commodore Vic-20. It looked and played the part (so much that Atari began taking an active interest in it…).

Bally Midway released its newest arcade coin-op game, *Tron*, into arcades across the land, to coincide with the cinematic release of the film the following month. *Tron* featured four sub-games and introduced us to Light Cycles. It's all in the wrists…

## THIS MONTH IN...

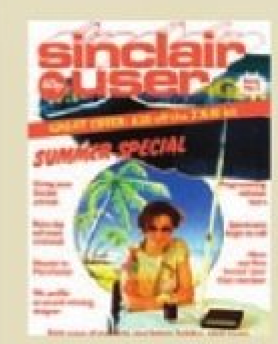
### COMPUTER & VIDEO GAMES



*C&VG* highlighted the release of *Zaxxon* into the arcades. Sega's game saw you fly your shuttle along an isometric landscape while blasting enemies and grounded craft. Use of an altimeter was also crucial to survive.



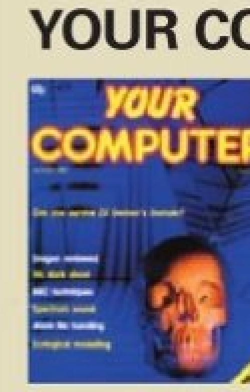

### SINCLAIR USER



Issue 5 of *Sinclair User* ran an interview with Rick Dickinson, who designed the distinctive look of the ZX81 and Spectrum. According to Rick, the ZX81 took six months to design. The Spectrum proved to be quicker to design but more complicated.




### YOUR COMPUTER



A retrospective interview with Tony Baden of Bug Byte featured. Its first run of forty tapes quickly sold, with Baden estimating it had sold over 500,000 games. Baden also commented that he once wrote eight games in one day for the ZX81.



# BACK TO THE NINETIES



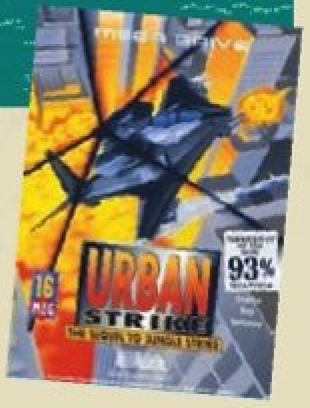
»[Mega Drive] *Bomberman* took his time arriving on the Mega Drive but, when he eventually did, it was well worth the wait.



»The VFX-1 was not a new shopping channel or chemical weapon but in fact a state-of-the-art virtual reality headset.



»[Mega Drive] New missions included saving survivors from a capsized cruise ship (Ernest Borgnine not included…)






# THE LATEST NEWS FROM JUNE 1994

**JUNE 1994 – EMAP goes PC, Lords Of Midnight III is announced, EA goes on Strike, Mega Drive finally gets Bomberman and Micro Machines go J-Carting. Richard Burton gets ready for a marathon four-way session…**

**New to newsstands this month was a magazine dedicated to the often-neglected PC gaming market. *PC Games* was published by EMAP, starting life as a bi-monthly magazine that quickly became a monthly affair. Despite being well-designed and informative it disappeared after just thirteen issues.**

If nothing else, the magazine did treat comic fans to some great cover artwork, with comic artist legends such as Kevin O'Neill (*Marshal Law*) and Simon Bisley (*Lobo*) supplying the majority of the covers during *PC Games'* lifespan.

Forte Technologies released a peripheral that just about every fan of videogaming would love: a virtual reality headset. It wasn't just a pair of goggles with some head-phones duck-taped to the side, either; this was a proper over-the-head helmet incorporating flip-up goggles.

The VFX-1 headset looked the business and, for the price tag of £650 – a snip for VR technology back then – would've been fantastic for first-person shooters and flight simulations. Indeed, demonstrations of *Doom* with the headset and accompanying hand controller, known as the Cyberpuck, were apparently stunning. Several software companies stated they were interested in developing software for the system, so the future bode well. A year later the company had all but gone into bankruptcy before being taken over by the company that would later become Vuzix.

Highlight of the month for PC gamers was news that Mike Singleton and his development company, Maelstrom Games, would be creating *Lords Of Midnight III: The Citadel* exclusively on PC, with Domark publishing the finished game.

It would continue directly from where *Doomdark's Revenge* ended, with Luxor The Moonprince setting off to find the Eye Of The Moon. Unfortunately, he is captured and imprisoned. So his son, Morkin, sets off to release his father and wipe the floor with his captor.

*The Citadel* was eventually released in 1995 and, despite continuing with the strategy with RPG elements that the previous games employed, *The Citadel* was panned by the computing press for its lacklustre graphics and a user interface that baffled many – a disappointing end to the *Lords Of Midnight* series.

Electronic Arts revealed that it was progressing well with the Mega Drive version of *Urban Strike*, the third in the isometric helicopter series. In a similar vein to the two previous outings, *Desert Strike* and *Jungle Strike*, it added a feature where you could land and leave your helicopter to embark on-foot for some search-and-destroy missions. It was an excellent addition to the *Strike* family and was released just before Christmas on the Mega Drive. SNES gamers had to wait a year longer, and Game Boy owners




»[Mega Drive] *Micro Machines 2* benefited from the joys of the J-Cart and both its incorporated controller ports.




»[PC] The earlier 8-bit *Lords Of Midnight* games were fantastic. Sadly, this was just complete and utter tosh.

## JUNE 1994 NEWS

13 June saw the beginnings of one of the most infamous murder investigations in modern history, when the bodies of Nicole Brown Simpson and Ron Goldman were found stabbed to death outside her house in Los Angeles. Nicole Simpson's ex-husband, American Footballer and actor O.J. Simpson, was the prime suspect. The media circus surrounding the events took an unexpected turn when O.J. Simpson failed to turn himself in to the Police on 17 June, instead embarking on a bizarre low-speed police chase in his white Bronco van. The whole event unfolded live on US television with millions watching. He eventually surrendered and was arrested. On 20 June, Simpson was charged with two counts of murder. He pleaded not guilty. With bloody gloves and footprints, a disguise kit and DNA evidence, there seemed to be only one conclusion. However, fast-forward to October 1995 and the jury delivered an unexpected 'not guilty' verdict…



»Pop quiz, hotshot: do you feel old knowing this movie came out 17 years ago?

10 June saw another chase, with the Keanu Reeves movie *Speed* receiving its world premiere. A bomb had been planted on a bus by a bitter madman, and if its speed dropped below 50mph it would detonate, killing all the passengers. Dennis Hopper and Sandra Bullock co-starred.

15 June saw a more family orientated movie receive its premiere; Disney's *The Lion King*. The Oscar winning movie featured music from Elton John and Tim Rice.

two years. It was to the last *Strike* game on the Mega Drive, although two further games did appear on the PlayStation and a smattering of other platforms; *Soviet Strike* and the ominous-sounding *Nuclear Strike*.

Another Mega Drive sequel currently under development was *Spot Goes To Hollywood,* which would see the return of the red, button-like mascot for 7-Up. The game was a departure from the original release in that it employed a 3D isometric view, although it was still a platform adventure. The plot for *Spot* saw him stuck in a movie projector, flitting from film to film hoping to collect Hollywood stars to make good his escape. It was a colourful game, though it lacked the playability of the original. A SNES version was planned but abandoned during development.

*Bomberman* starred in six games on the SNES, yet Mega Drive owners had to wait until 1994 for their first (and only) game on the system. However, *Mega Bomberman* was superb, and well worth waiting for.

There was yet more Mega Drive gaming in the form of *The Death And Return Of Superman.* Developed by Blizzard, it followed a story arc that ran in the comics in 1992-93, which followed the apparent death of Superman at the hands of Doomsday. Several Superman replacements emerged on the scene and put themselves forward to fill his red pants – that is, before the recently deceased Superman turned up…

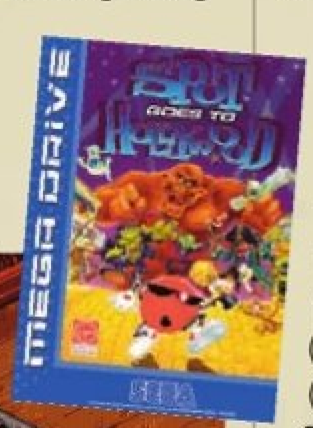
Also released on the SNES, *Superman* was a bland scrolling beat-em-up that didn't live up to the license. It didn't sell particularly well, making it one of the most sought-after (and expensive) Mega Drive games for collectors to pick up today.

Codemasters revealed that it was well underway with the development of *Micro Machines 2: Turbo Tournament* for the Mega Drive. A SNES version was also planned, to be published by Ocean Software, but wasn't released until 1996.

It was essentially more of the same but much bigger and better, although it benefitted from the J-Cart it was released on, which incorporated two controller ports and enabled four players to play on a Mega Drive without the need of an additional multiplayer adaptor. Whichever version you picked up though, you were guaranteed some great gaming.

The *Mean Machines Sega* reviewing team cast their expert eyes over the new releases, with *Streets Of Rage 3* (Sega, Mega Drive), *Grind Stormer* (Tengen, Mega Drive), *Mega Turrican* (Data East, Mega Drive), *Peter Sampras Tennis* (Codemasters, Mega Drive), *Rise Of The Dragon* (Dynamix, Mega-CD), *RBI Baseball '94* (Tengen, Mega Drive), *Third World War* (Extreme, Mega-CD) and *Shadowrun* (Data East, Mega Drive) all receiving healthy scores.

On the flipside, *Super Battleships* (Mindscape, Mega Drive) received a paltry 3% for its brain-numbing crapness.





»[Mega Drive] Although not as much fun as the original game, *Spot Goes To Hollywood* was definitely worth a peek.

## THIS MONTH IN…

### SUPERPLAY



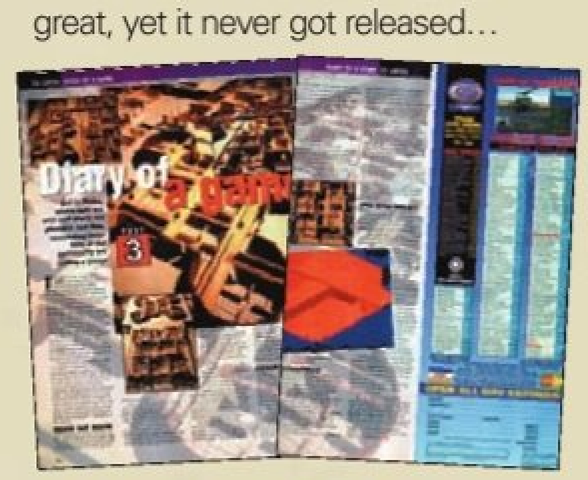
News that Nintendo was planning to release *Killer Instinct* on the forthcoming N64 indicated a change in its policy. Nintendo modelled itself as a family company, and games featuring the words 'kill' or 'killer' weren't allowed on any cartridges up to this point.



### CU AMIGA



This month's Diary Of A Game featured *Space Academy* on the Amiga CD32. It was programmed by prolific coder John Jones-Steele with graphics from Dave Rowe, he of Quicksilva inlay and *Knightmare* TV show backgrounds. Previews of this isometric arcade strategy looked great, yet it never got released…



### THE ONE AMIGA



*The One* interviewed Tony Bickley, producer at *World Cup USA 94* creator US Gold. Bickley stated it was great and was to be reviewed next month. Three issues later it received 35%, and was released well after the actual World Cup had ended…



## CHARTS

### JUNE 1994



**MEGA DRIVE**

1. NBA Jam (Acclaim)
2. FIFA International Soccer (Electronic Arts)
3. Sonic The Hedgehog 3 (Sega)
4. Aladdin (Sega)
5. Mortal Kombat (Acclaim)



**SNES**

1. NBA Jam (Acclaim)
2. Sensible Soccer (Sony)
3. Super Mario Kart (Nintendo)
4. Sim City (Nintendo)
5. Super Mario All-Stars (Nintendo)



**AMIGA**

1. Manchester United Premier League Champions (Krisalis)
2. Beneath A Steel Sky (Virgin Games)
3. Cannon Fodder (Virgin Games)
4. Frontier: Elite 2 (Gametek)
5. Premier Manager 2 (Gremlin Graphics)

**MUSIC**

1. Love Is All Around (Wet Wet Wet)
2. Baby I Love Your Way (Big Mountain)
3. You Don't Love Me (No, No, No) – (Dawn Penn)
4. Swamp Thing (Grid)
5. No Good (Start The Dance) – (Prodigy)




500
5000



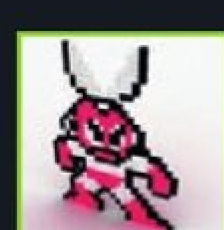
# Battletoads

RASH, ZITZ AND PIMPLE KICK BACK FROM GAMING HISTORY

RETROBATE PROFILE

» NAME: OLD SKOOLRC
» JOINED: 26 SEPTEMBER 2008
» LOCATION: WEST LONDON
» OCCUPATION: NOT GIVEN
» FAVE GAME SYSTEM: NES

#43



» NES
» RARE LTD.
» 1991

**1991 was the last great year for releases on the Famicom/NES. I remember playing *Battletoads* at my local import games store during that summer.**

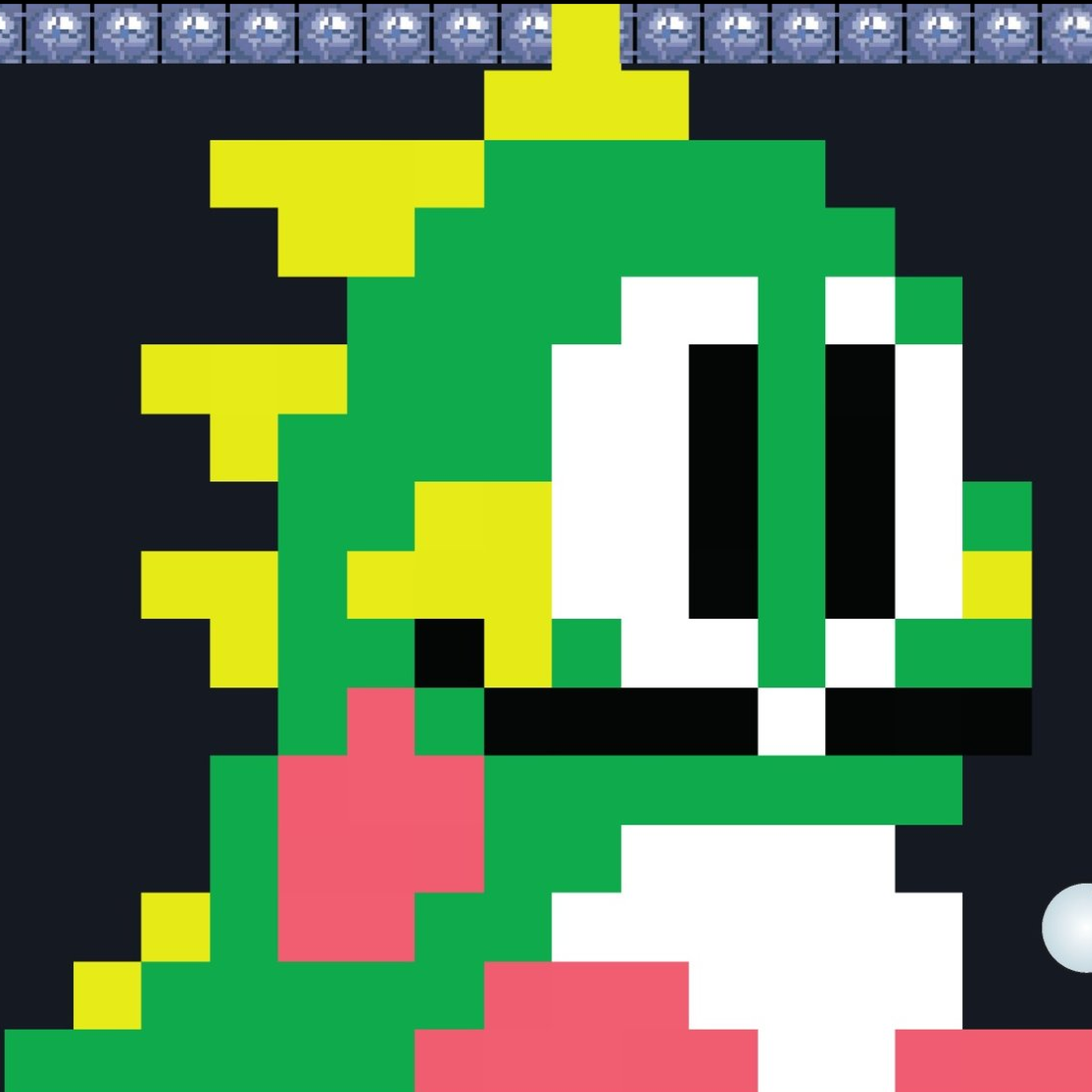
Toads and not turtles, hmm? I must admit it was a bold attempt by Rare to develop this game to rival the *TMNT* games, and it produced a unique and challenging game that spawned many successful versions and sequels on other systems. One of the most famous versions was *Battletoads & Double Dragon*, creating the *Ultimate Team* crossover years before the likes of *SNK Vs. Capcom*.

*Battletoads* was well-loved by a huge number of NES-owning gamers, particularly for its humour. So I just wanted to say a few words as the game is now 20 years old! Do you remember the 'big fist' and 'large boot' moves accompanied by the 'THUD' sound effect as the toads battered their way through the stages? That crazy tribal drum beat while the game is paused? The frustrating hover bike level? Swinging down the shaft and placing a big pair in the faces of the enemies? The headbutt move with sprouting ram horns? Man, there are so many memorable and funny moments in this game, and with its fast-paced action it was easily the most brutal beat-'em-up on the Famicom/NES.

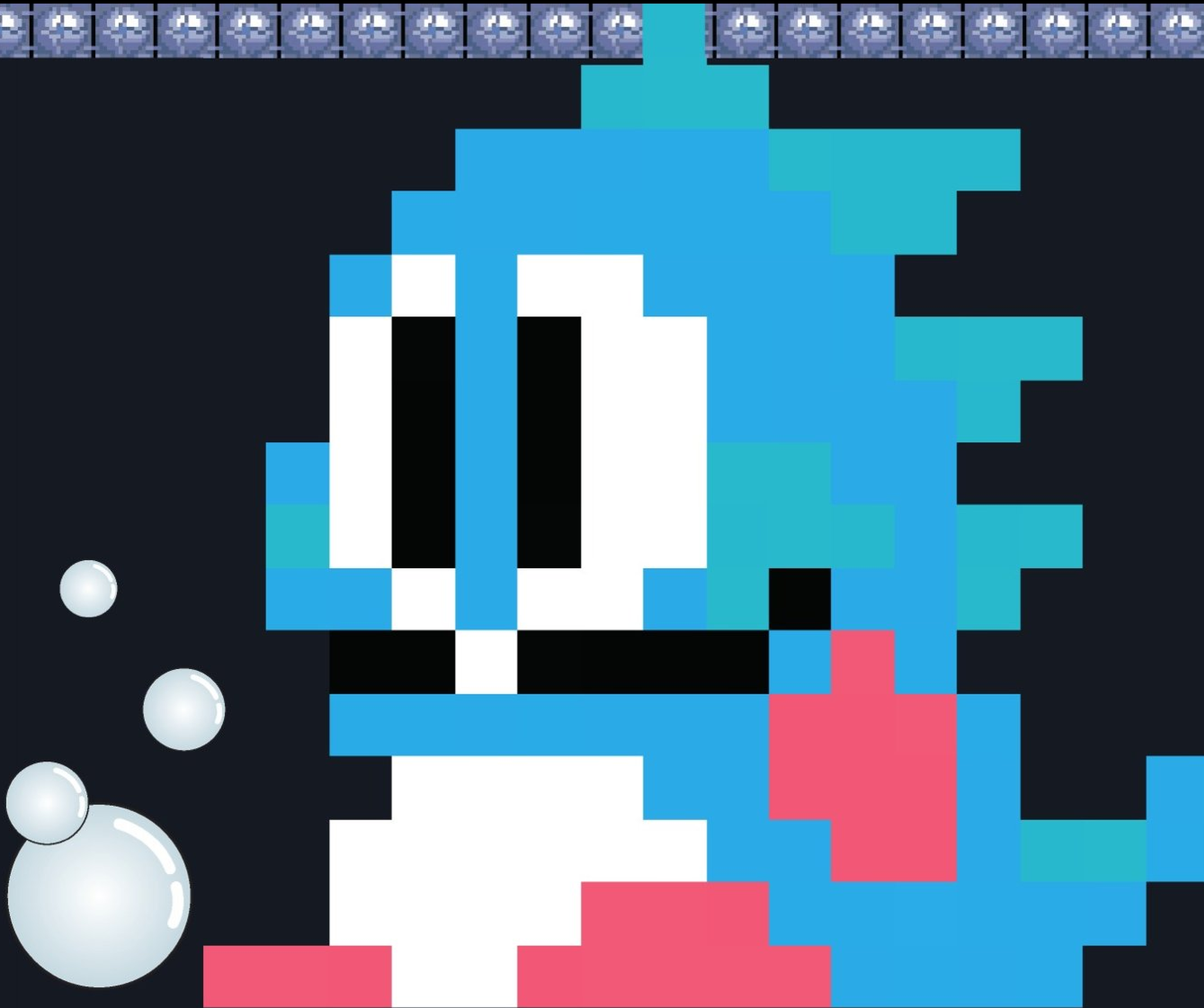
Despite the game becoming difficult during later stages, it was still fun to play, especially with a friend in the two-player co-op mode. Rare produced a fine game with great level design, good graphics and well-defined characters and backgrounds. *Battletoads* has an appealing flavour to it, and this is thanks to Rare's ability to create unique-looking games – Rare had a distinct style compared to other software houses at the time.

20 years on, this game is still very playable, it has aged well and is still very amusing to play. In recent times, *Battletoads* has maintained a strong fan base – hence the homebrew version on the Dreamcast. I certainly hope *Battletoads* will one day recieve an official remake, as it's a great game that deserves a reboot (no pun intended). *

Want to appear in the magazine? Be sure to upload your classic profiles at www.retrogamer.net



# BUBBLE MEMORIES



# BUBBLE BOBBLE HAS LOST NONE OF ITS FIZZ OVER THE YEARS. IT'S A TIMELESS CLASSIC THAT INTRODUCED MANY STAPLES TO THE PLATFORM GENRE, AND AS IT TURNS 25 THIS YEAR, STUART HUNT CELEBRATES BY BLOWING THE SERIES APART

**"Now, it is beginning of a fantastic story!! Let's make a journey to the cave of monsters! Good luck!" In 1986, those magical and ever so slightly nonsensical words preceded one of the most charming arcade games of the Eighties.**

That game was *Bubble Bobble,* and its whimsical premise saw two sickeningly cute miniature brontosauruses named Bub and Bob (which are actually two boys called Bubblun and Bobblun who get transformed by a dead beluga whale – don't ask) battle their way through 100 rooms of pure run-and-jump brilliance to rescue their beloved girlfriends, Patty and Betty.

To succeed in their quest, Bub and Bob had to clean each room of enemies, and did this by amiably encasing them inside bubbles. Once captured inside these soapy round cages, the enemies posed no danger – well at least for a time; they eventually broke free and started flashing red with rage – and the boys could burst the bubbles using their horns or fins to destroy whatever was trapped inside.

*Bubble Bobble* was conceived by Japanese game designer Fukio Mitsuji (aka MJT). One of Taito's leading creative minds in the early Eighties, Mitsuji designed and worked on many of the company's most creative arcade titles, including *Land Sea Air Squad, Syvalion,* and *Volfied.*

Unfortunately Mitsuji was rarely interviewed, and sadly died in December 2008, reportedly of a sudden heart attack. Therefore there is very little background information about the man and his games. However, in 2005, in a rare interview to promote the release of *Taito Legends,* Mitsuji offered some insightful answers about *Bubble Bobble* and the reaction it garnered.

When asked where the idea for *Bubble Bobble*'s concept originated, Mitsuji explained that it was his intention to create a game that was both "thrilling and exhilarating", adding: "Bubbles are an intuitive visual cue to convey a fun element, and popping them all at once triggers thrills and exhilaration."

He then went on to highlight the importance of *Bubble Bobble*'s iconic multiplayer mode, and how the game's look and fun nature helped it to appeal to a wide audience.

"You had to play cooperatively in order to reach the true ending," he explained. "So compared to other titles, cooperative gameplay is a more crucial part. As a result, many players challenged the game by teaming up with other players. Also, couples were seen playing the game together."

> **"In order to gain wide audiences, creators must come up with a fresh idea and easy-to-grasp design"**

Finally, Mitsuji gave an interesting response to a question about how difficulty levels and design in games had changed over the years. It said much about his design philosophy.

"Since many players' skills are already tuned to a specific game design, newer games tend to become harder," he answered. "So, in order to gain wider audiences, the creators must come up with a fresh idea and easy-to-grasp game design. In other words, simple yet deep gameplay elements. Game creators must come up with them. And I would like to see more game creators focus on fresh game designs."

An evangelist of original game design, it was that passion for innovation that saw Mitsuji take *Bubble Bobble* into a bold new direction with *Rainbow Islands*, and would later see him set-up his own design school – MJT Game Designer's School – to teach the next generation of game designers those important values he felt so passionately about.

Given Mitsuji was both highly creative and a staunch supporter of inventive game design, its comes as little surprise that *Bubble Bobble*'s simplicity belied a title that was incredibly deep when you scratched beneath the surface.

*Bubble Bobble* was a revolutionary title that introduced many platform game staples. It featured an imaginative and fun attack mechanic, simultaneous two-player mode (the first game to ever offer such a mode), a dizzying array of power-ups and secrets, references to past Taito games (although at the time there wasn't a great many to choose from over the iconic *Space Invaders*, a little-known racing game from Mitsuji called *Super Dead Heat*, and *Bubble Bobble*'s spiritual ancestor *Chack'n Pop*), three different endings, and a wonderful difficult curve and secret drop system.

How the latter two aspects were achieved – the difficulty curve and secret system – was largely due to *Bubble Bobble*'s technical makeup. Internal counters inside the coin-op ensured nothing occurred randomly in the game, with the odd exception of the fireball bubble. For example, causing Bub and Bob to run a lot would entice the speed boost pick-up to appear, while the rapid bubble blow upgrade would show itself after the brothers had fired a set number of bubbles or jumped a set number of times. As a result, players soon discovered that they could make life easier for themselves by identifying the best hang-out spots in each room and manipulating the power-ups and secret item drops to their advantage.

That passion to be constantly innovating saw Mitsuji create an unusual sequel to *Bubble Bobble*. Rather than follow orders from the bigwigs above to create a sequel offering more of the same bubble-bursting action, Mitsuji strived to give its fans much more. With *Rainbow Islands* he created a sequel that at first glance seemed an entirely different beast, but which gradually revealed itself to be tonally similar to its predecessor.

Released a year after *Bubble Bobble*, *Rainbow Islands* (or, to give it its full title, *Rainbow Islands: The Story Of Bubble Bobble 2*) was a superb follow-up that improved on the original in every way.

Mitsuji made a number of fundamental changes to the original formula. Vertical-scrolling themed stages now replaced the single-screen arenas, and instead of clearing the screen of enemies Bub and Bob had to reach the top of each stage before a gradually rising water tide enshrouded them.

A new method for attacking enemies was also introduced, one that again doubled up as a means to help Bub and Bob get around. Rather than capturing enemies inside bubbles, Bubblun and Bobblun (reverted back to their normal selves at the end of *Bubble Bobble*) could now create rainbows to attack enemies, and also use them as makeshift bridges. Jumping on the colourful arcs would cause them to cascade down the screen, killing anything underneath, and this, in a similar way to killing large groups of

*Bubble Bobble* features a hard mode entitled Super mode. It's unlocked by inputting a code that is revealed when two players complete a 'normal' game. In Super mode enemy whereabouts are different and the rooms are in different colours.



» [Arcade] *Bubble Bobble* was designed to be played by two players cooperatively. Indeed, one of the most notable aspects of its design is that it cannot be properly completed playing alone (see right).

## THE ENDINGS



*Bubble Bobble* is notable for being one the earliest games to feature multiple endings. Here's a rundown of all three possible finales, and how to see them.




### THE BAD ENDING

Complete *Bubble Bobble* solo and there is no happy reunion with the girls, no one gets transformed back to normal and the player is plonked back somewhere random in the game, usually between room 50 and 80.




### THE GOOD ENDING

Complete it with a chum to see the 'good' ending. Both brothers change back and are reunited with their girlfriends, and a cryptic message flashes up. Jot down the code, enter the treasure room to decipher it and you'll unlock Super mode.




### THE TRUE ENDING

Finishing Super mode in co-op unlocks the 'true' ending. The brothers turn back to boys, are reunited with their girlfriends and also break the spell that turned the boys' parents into Super Drunk.

enemies simultaneously in *Bubble Bobble*, was the key to unlocking special items and scoring big.

But *Rainbow Islands* also retained that hidden depth of its predecessor. Secret rooms, bonus items, nods to past games and alternate endings were once again present, taking everything players loved about the original but presenting it in an entirely different way.

*Rainbow Islands* became the last *Bubble Bobble* designed by Mitsuji, who eventually left Taito to work as a freelance designer. Taito was thus staring at a fork in the road as far as *Bubble Bobble* was concerned: would it continue to follow Mesuji's lead and push the franchise in bold new directions or play it safe and offer fans more of the same? Well, it sort of did both, creating a confusing lineage for the franchise in the process.

A direct sequel to *Rainbow Islands* came with the release of *Parasol Stars* in 1991. It's notable for being a Taito game that looked like an arcade game, sounded like an arcade game, played like an arcade game but was never released into arcades – it debuted on the PC Engine before later appearing on the Amiga, Atari ST, Game Boy and NES.

Though aesthetically it shared similarities with *Rainbow Islands, Parasol Stars'* gameplay closer resembled *Bubble Bobble*. Parallels include levels being single-screen arenas (with a small amount of scrolling on some stages), players completing a stage by clearing the screen of enemies, and bubbles making a return, appearing as four flavours of attack power-up.

Losing their ability to fire rainbows, the brothers were armed with parasols, a cheap gift given to them for saving the Rainbow Islands but a new weapon that proved incredibly versatile. The brollies could be used as shields, to pick up and lob enemies and power-ups, and to help the brothers float to the ground in *Mary Poppins* fashion. As the title implies, the parasols are the stars of the show, slotting nicely aside the bubbles and rainbows of the earlier games.

But *Parasol Stars* did take a number of aspects from *Rainbow Islands*. As well as the boys keeping their natural, God-given looks, the eight worlds were once again disparately themed, including Rainbow World, Machine World and, of course, the oddly obligatory Casino World. There were even two bonus hidden worlds too, unlocked by successfully completing secret tasks.

In 1993 Taito released *Bubble Bobble Part 2* on the NES, which introduced two new bubble dragons to the series, Robby and Cubby – descendents of Bubblun and Bobblun. The US manual for the game (which was never released in Europe) misstates that the heroes are the original Bub and Bob, but there are a few ways you can tell the two characters are more likely intended to be their descendents. The boxart is identical




» [Arcade] *Bubble Bobble* really hasn't aged a day. It's still incredibly cute and playable 25 years on.




» [Arcade] Collecting letters that spell 'EXTEND' awards you an extra life, leading to some frantic battles between players.



A number of *Bubble Bobble* bootlegs were released into amusement arcades, including the adult bootleg *Miss Bubble II*, which slotted images of semi-nude ladies into the backgrounds of stages. They should've named it *Boobie Boobie*.

# BUBBLE BOBBLE BADDIES

**A rundown of the cute harbingers of death facing off against Bub and Bob**



**ZEN-CHAN**
The first enemy you face, these wind-up droids have a moderate walking speed, can jump, but have no projectile attack.



**BANEBOU**
This thing on a spring bounds around the stage erratically, which makes him a fairly difficult chap to evade.



**MIGHTA**
This ghostly foe moves in a similar way to Zen-Chan but can also roll boulders. Mighta debuted in *Chack'n Pop*.



**MONSTA**
This purple beluga whale moves diagonally and rebounds off walls. This enemy also debuted in *Chack'n Pop*.



**PULPUL**
Pulpuls move in the same manner as Monstas but their enhanced speed makes them more dangerous.



**HIDGEON**
These enemies behave similarly to Zen-Chans but are faster, cannot jump as high and can launch fireballs.



**INVADER**
These familiar-looking foes regimentally move from left to right while cascading down the screen firing lasers.



**DRUNK**
A dangerous foe with quick speed and agility, Drunk throws empty bottles of booze like they're boomerangs.



**BARON VON BLUBBA**
True villain Baron Von Blubba acts as an invincible time warden, appearing if players take too long to finish a stage.



**SUPER DRUNK**
The last boss is a super-sized version of Drunk. He jumps around the screen, lobbing empty liquor bottles.



**RASCAL**
Rascal only appears in the game's secret rounds as a Time Over monster – similar to Baron Von Blubba.

# THE CONVERSIONS

**It's a classic bubbling over with impressive home conversions**




## ZX SPECTRUM

**This solid conversion** by Mike Follin plays a very faithful game of *Bubble Bobble*. Sure it lacks a bit in the colour department, but the cheery, fun two-player gameplay is captured brilliantly. Our biggest gripe though: no music.

## COMMODORE 64

**Ste Ruddy did** an impressive job for the C64 conversion, garnering a staggering 97% in *Crash* for his efforts. It's easy to see why critics were so enamoured with it. It's a top-notch conversion that ticks every box.



## AMSTRAD CPC

**A simple, single-screen** game with Day-Glo graphics: the CPC could handle games like this in its sleep. Sadly, this port is the least impressive of the three foremost 8-bit micros, but it's still a decent enough conversion.






## NES

**All the console** conversions of *Bubble Bobble* are excellent, and the NES version is a solid port. Developed by Taito, the great graphics are tarnished a little by occasional flickering, but it does feature a useful password system.



## MASTER SYSTEM

**One of the** best ports of *Bubble Bobble* ever released, it contains all the 'Super' stages – giving it 200 in total – and new secrets, pick-ups and special items too. Its continue system also lets you auto-restart.

## GAME GEAR

**There is little** separating this and the SMS version. The stages feel a little squished, and Bub and Bob's jump a little unwieldy, but it does offer a two-player link-up mode, making this the definitive handheld iteration.




## GAME BOY

**The odd GB** version of *Bubble Bobble* isn't a port at all, but a single-player game with scrolling, rearranged stages. It also has a new story about finding 'moon water' to heal your sick brother. We're not fans.

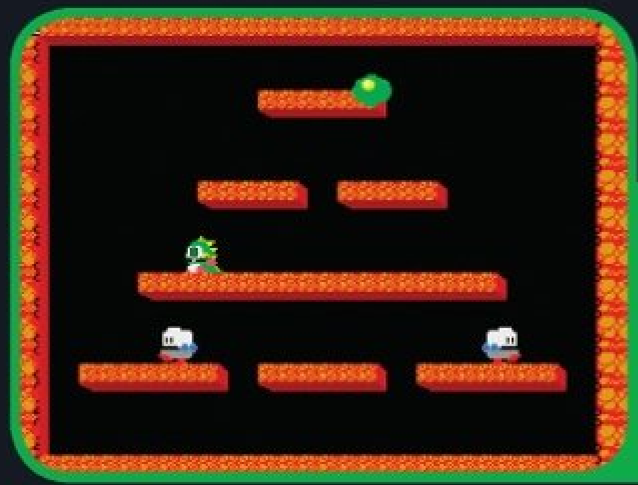


WORST VERSION



## ATARI ST

**We get bored** of writing it probably as much as you get tired of reading it, but there is little separating the ST and Amiga ports. In fact, rumour is the Amiga version was heavily based on an ST port. It's another solid effort.



## AMIGA

**This version plays** a very decent game of *Bubble Bobble*, looking and sounding great. Our biggest problem is that it is sadly missing many of the extra secret levels. Aside from that it's a solid conversion.

## PC

**The PC version** is very similar to the Amiga and ST ports. It's looks fairly good and plays well enough, but it too is missing secrets. Also letting it down is the ghastly in-game music, which is incredibly tinny.



## SHARP X6800

**A nigh-on arcade**-perfect port with great graphics and sound, plus it gives you the option to tweak the amount of lives you have and the extend pattern, as well as continue from where you died. It doesn't get much better than this.



BEST VERSION

The US version of *Bubble Bobble* offers the option to play the game in Super mode straight off the bat.

*Bubble Bobble* is notable for being one of the first games to feature alternate endings.

Fukio Mitsuji's last game was the Game Gear puzzler *Magical Puzzle Popils*.

## Q&A



We caught up with Ste Ruddy, to find out how he managed to create such a splendid version of *Bubble Bobble* for C64.

**So Ste, how did you end up porting *Bubble Bobble* to C64?**
I was working for Software Creations and we had a good working relationship with Firebird; the company had done a fair few titles with Firebird including Mike Follins' excellent Speccy version of *The Sentinel*. I'm not sure how it came about but Creations got the contract on the back of this relationship and I got the C64 job.

**And did you have access to the coin-op at any point during its development?**
Yep, Firebird sent us a shiny new *Bubble Bobble* cabinet when development started. I don't think any of us had seen the game in the arcades at that time, so we had to play the game an awful lot to figure out how it worked - obviously not much of a chore.

**What were the most challenging aspects of working on the conversion?**
On C64 the biggest challenge was getting the bubbles on-screen and fitting everything in memory. The bubbles were not suitable for the standard C64 method of reusing the eight hardware sprites in different parts of the screen due to the nature of the airflow patterns on each level. In the end, the bubbles were implemented as double buffered software sprites (which consumed more memory) to allow them to all congregate in one area of the screen. Towards the end of the project I started to run out of memory so some features did have to go, and the game ended up with end sequence music on a temporary boot screen and a bunch of sprite frames were removed. Fortunately all the levels stayed, though.

**Are you pleased by how it turned out?**
Oh, yes. Everything I knew about the coin-op made it into the C64 version and it played quite well considering the loss of the jump button.

***Bubble Bobble* is full of secrets, multiple endings and special areas. Were you told or made aware of these before working on the conversion?**
Unfortunately not. We implemented the observed behaviour of the coin-op but had no idea of the logic and depth behind the game. On the C64, the pickups that appear are weighted towards the order pickups appear in the arcade machine from a clean boot – I did see that this tended to be the same, but was affected by the way you play the game. Unfortunately, I couldn't figure out the logic so it's a random bias (which hopefully gives similar results). The secret screens were implemented but we had no idea of the messages or secret endings. The C64 did have the Super cheat in, though (a key combination on the boot screen) as I think someone saw an arcade cabinet set up running that way.




to the Game Boy title *Bubble Bobble Junior*, the brothers look chubbier (which can be put down to baby fat rather than binge eating) and, perhaps most notably, the bonus rounds oddly refer to the heroes as 'Junior'. It's a bit of a mess, but it's not uncommon for game manuals to make naming mistakes.

Anyway, the NES sequel repeats the story of the original by having the boys of the boys enter the Cave Of Monsters to rescue their girlfriends. It featured the classic *Bubble Bobble* gameplay of old but with take-turns multiplayer, wrap-around levels, and some new enemies, including boss fights. As we mentioned, it also introduced entertaining bonus rounds, one of which sees the brothers playing volleyball against their enemies in the game. Robby and Cubby also had the ability to self-inflate, enabling them to float into the air more easily to get to hard-to-reach areas. In past games they had been forced to rely on repeatedly bouncing off their own bubbles.

A Game Boy version called *Bubble Bobble Junior* was also released, and was completely different to its NES counterpart. It featured different stages, a new story and was single-player-only. Dropping Cubby, it saw Robby trying to rescue villagers from a new villain called 'King Great Skull' (where do they come up with these names?). Unfortunately, it's not a patch on the excellent NES version. It's lacking any kind of multiplayer and has fiddly scrolling arenas, which, after the dismal *Classic Bubble Bobble*, should have been totally outlawed as far as *Bubble Bobble* was concerned.

Following this rather confusing side-story, it was then *Bubble Bobble* returned us to the lives of Bub and Bob and its arcades roots. *Bubble Symphony* (aka *Bubble Bobble 2*) was released to celebrate the series turning ten years old, and was a four-player 'reimaging' of the original *Bubble Bobble* – thus cannily granting it immunity from having to shoehorn itself into the existing timeline. It was also a reboot that seemed to be targeted more towards kids. We say this because it introduced two new girl characters to the fold – friends of the boys (we're not sure what Patty and Betty would make of that) – and has a blurry pastel fairytale aesthetic to its new visuals and a mechanic whereby the kids could collect and combine musical notes. Basically it's about as edgy as a circle. What is interesting about *Symphony*, though, is that many of the levels seem to be based on those in the original, and some rooms offer branching routes through the game.

A sequel to *Symphony*, *Bubble Memories*, was released the following year and marked the final arcade release for the series. Once again Bub and Bob took centre-stage (if you've been taking note you'll have noticed they've appeared in all the arcade releases), in a sequel that was essentially a return to classic *Bubble Bobble* values but with new levels and a sneaky new charge attack that allowed Bub and Bob to create a bigger bubble to encase large and multiple enemies. Sadly, it's a disappointing coin-op swansong for the siblings, as it feels like a bit of a step backwards in terms of visuals and gameplay from *Symphony*, although it does have the best-named baddie in videogame history: Super Dark Great Dragon.

In recent years, the quality of the *Bubble Bobble* franchise, away from the *Puzzle Bobble* series, has been flagging a bit. Additionally, *Rainbow Islands* and *Bubble Bobble* seem to have disconnected and become their own franchises: while *Bubble Bobble* sequels have continued to arrive, Taito has released the somewhat disparate *Rainbow Islands Revolution* and WiiWare title *Rainbow Islands: Towering Adventure*.

> "You had to play co-op to reach the true ending. Compared to other titles, co-op is more crucial"

The next two releases in the *Bubble Bobble* franchise were *Bubble Bobble Revolution* and *Bubble Bobble Evolution*, and both were disappointing. Released for the DS, *Revolution* contained a solid port of the original game as well as a now infamous 'New Age' game – which was so 'new age' it couldn't actually be finished. A bug that wasn't detected in the North American version before it shipped made it impossible to beat the 30th stage in the game due to a missing boss. Thus it

In 2006, Taito announced it had lost the original source code to the game following a reorganisation. To retrieve it, the developer had to disassemble the original game rom and various home computer ports.



» [NES] *Bubble Bobble Part 2* is a fantastic sequel. It's also bloody rare and expensive ($300-$400 for a boxed copy).




received a bit of a battering by fans and critics – and rightly so.

The next release, *Evolution*, bravely experimented with the core gameplay, but to forgettable effect. Carrying little resemblance to the classic *Bubble Bobble* structure, it saw players flit control between Bub and Bob. Its peculiar plot sees the pair split up and banished to two separate prison towers. To escape, the brothers have to flip switches and solve puzzles that will grant them access to an elevator to take them to the next level, where they then repeat the process. Oddly, the boys don't work together – the actions of one brother to the trio's bubble attacks. Though it was an original idea, in practice the control proved fiddly, and went against the wonderful simplicity of the original, so critical reception to it was lukewarm.

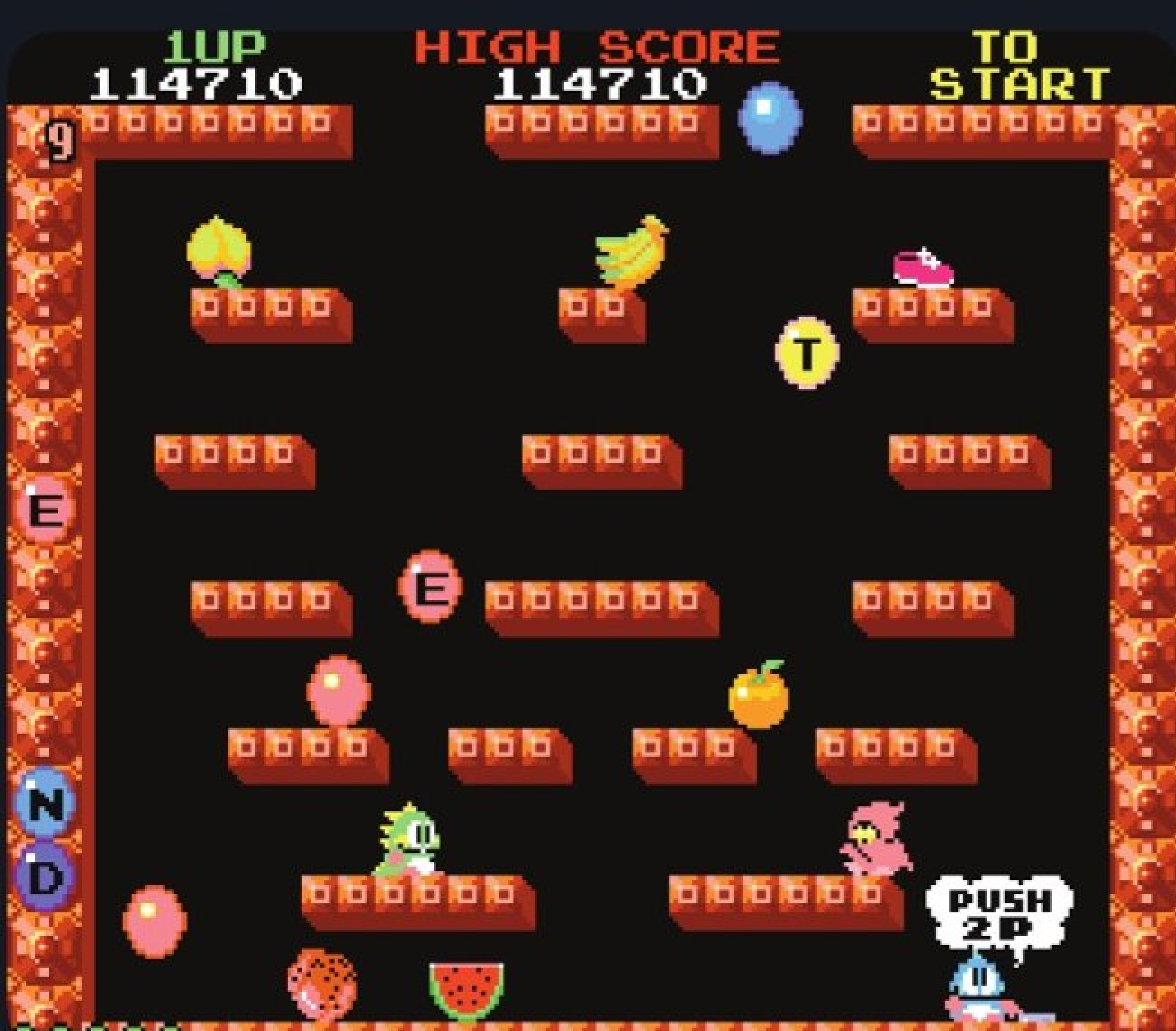
The two most recent *Bubble Bobble* games were digital releases, and offered decent remakes of the original game. The WiiWare release *Bubble Bobble Plus!* offered a spruced-up version of the original with a couple of new modes, including an arrange mode that supported up to four-player co-op. A virtually identical XBLA version was later released for the X360 the same year, adding map packs via DLC and given

> **"Many players challenged the game by teaming up. Also, couples were seen playing together"**

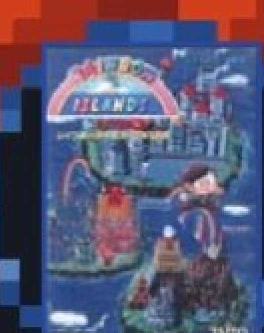
have no effect on the other's situation – and therefore the idea falls flat. Boss battles and snowballing power-ups are a nice touch, but ultimately it stands as less an evolution and more an entirely different game. Oh, and it doesn't even feature cooperative play.

A DS sequel to *Revolution* was released in 2007 called *Bubble Bobble: Double Shot*. Taking a strange, almost *Ikaruga*-ish approach to the traditional gameplay, it saw players switching control on the fly between three bubble dinosaurs – Bub, Bob and some random new guy named Bubu, who each fired different coloured bubbles – to vanquish enemies with a colour-specific weakness the suffix *Neo!* – we can only suspect likely due to some mysterious *Bubble Bobble* custom that stipulates all games must have a title that is confusing and/or misleading.

And so closes this look back at the *Bubble Bobble* series. An often puzzling series we hope we've helped to untangle, its history shows the difficulties standing before developers when trying to breathe new life into popular franchises. Nevertheless, Taito can be applauded for creating one of the longest-standing franchises in videogames and a recognised and lovable duo of heroes, and for taking us all on one fantastic journey.




» [Arcade] *Bubble Bobble*'s creator, Fukio Mitsuji, also worked on the titles *Land Sea Air Squad*, *Syvalion* and *Volfied*.



**4. Rainbow Islands Extra**
Multi | 1988
A hardened version of *Rainbow Islands* that featured identical level structure but jumbled enemy placement.

**8. Bubble Bobble Part 2 (aka Bubble Bobble Junior)**
Game Boy | 1993
Single-player only, this shares little in common with the classic gameplay.





**12. Classic Bubble Bobble**
Game Boy Colour | 1999
Yet another poor GB effort that keeps the 'Moon Water' story from *Bubble Bobble Junior*.

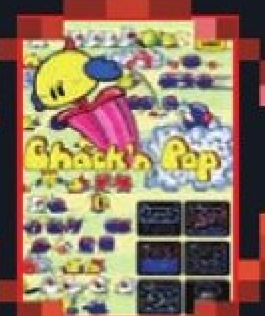
**16. Bubble Bobble Revolution**
DS | 2005
A disappointing sequel featuring a decent port of the original and a broken update with levels similar to the Game Boy titles.



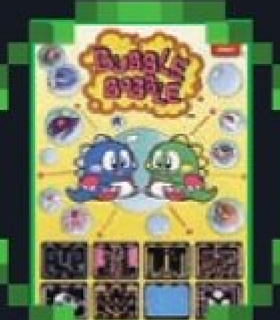


**20. Bubble Bobble Double Shot**
DS | 2009
Unsuccessful attempt to do something clever with the *BB* formula sees you swapping control between three dragons.

**1. Chack'n Pop**
Arcade | 1983
A spiritual ancestor of sorts, *Chack'n Pop* featured a number of enemy characters that would later reappear in *Bubble Bobble*.



**2. Bubble Bobble/ Super Bubble Bobble**
Arcade | 1986
*Bubble Bobble* became one of the most popular and iconic platform arcade games of the Eighties.



**3. Rainbow Islands**
Arcade | 1987
A superb sequel that took everything that was great about *Bubble Bobble* and then somehow made it even better. It's a true timeless classic.





**5. Bubble Bobble**
Game Boy | 1991
A ropey single-player arcade conversion with horrible scrolling stages, but notable for introducing a new 'Moon Water' story.

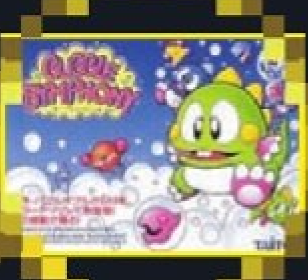


**6. Parasol Stars**
Multi | 1991
A great sequel, it looks and plays like a perfect marriage of *Bubble Bobble* and *Rainbow Islands*. It also swaps rainbows for brollies.



**7. Bubble Bobble Part 2**
NES | 1993
An excellent sequel that introduced a new generation of heroes: descendants of Bub and Bob.

**9. Bubble Bobble Symphony**
Multi | 1994
Bub and Bob return in this anniversary reboot joined by two new faces. It supports four-player co-op play.



**10. Bubble Memories**
Arcade | 1995
**This disappointing final arcade release appears to play things closer to the original – hence the 'memories' in the title, perhaps.**



**11. Bubble Bobble featuring enhanced Rainbow Islands**
Multi | 1996
A port of *Bubble Bobble* with an enhanced *Rainbow Islands* that's barely mentioned on the box.





**13. Rainbow Islands – Putty's Party**
Wonder Swan | 2000
An odd *Rainbow Islands* novelty game featuring similar levels but making various pointless tweaks everywhere.



**14. Rainbow Islands**
Game Boy Colour | 2001
A strange version with horizontal scrolling (arghh!), which allows you to play the first six islands in any order.



**15. Bubble Bobble Old And New**
Game Boy Colour | 2002
You get two versions: a straight port and one with enhanced visuals. Scrolling? You betcha.

**17. Rainbow Islands Revolution**
DS | 2005
*Revolution* takes *Rainbow Islands* gameplay but allows you to draw your own rainbows using the stylus. Not great.



**18. Bubble Bobble Evolution**
PSP | 2006
Strange sequel that introduces a pointless character swap mechanic and boring switch puzzles.



**19. Rainbow Islands Evolution**
PSP | 2007
Bub and Bob fight an evil record company with a robot assistant and fire rainbows using something called a 'hurdy-gurdy'.





**21. Rainbow Islands: Towering Adventure**
Wii (WiiWare) | 2009
Classic mechanics, but an unflattering Wii paintjob. The new levels flow well, but the action is broken up with boss fights.



**22. Bubble Bobble Plus!**
Wii (WiiWare) | 2009
A decent update with a nice selection of options, levels and modes – among them a four-player Arrange mode.



**23. Bubble Bobble Neo!**
Xbox 360 (XBLA) | 2009
Features redrawn visuals, and various options and modes similar to those in *Bubble Bobble Plus!*.

# HOW TO WIN AND CHEAT AT BUBBLE BOBBLE




With a wealth of secrets and useful techniques waiting to be exploited, we thought we'd dedicate two pages to giving you the very best tips and advice. If you're struggling to see past level 20, the true ending is still evading your grasp, or Von Blubba is proving a real von bugger, gently place these two pages across your troubled brow… after reading them, of course!

## CHEAT THE SYSTEM

If you play *Bubble Bobble* alone and die then it's game over. That's it. You're not given the option to pick up where you left off. No sir. However, there is a sly way to cheat the game into letting you continue – two, actually. The obvious method is to simply stock up on credits and hit the Player 2 button the second before you're about to snuff it. The other – far less faffier – method is to hold down the one player button when you die and not release it until Bub is resurrected. If you're worried about missing the window of opportunity then resting a pot plant/pint or large cooked chicken on the button has become a time-honoured tradition with fans.




## HOW TO ACCESS SUPER MODE

If you're playing the US version you can access Super mode from the title screen. To unlock it in the original version though, *Bubble Bobble* has to be completed using both Bub and Bob. Doing this gives you a cryptic code that can be decoded by reaching the first of the three Treasure Rooms. If you can't be arsed with all that, simply input **Start - Jump - Bubble - Left - Right - Jump - Start - Right** at the title screen. And hey presto!




## HOW TO KILL A VON BLUBBA

Though doing so costs someone a life, it is possible to kill a Von Blubba (aka Skel) when playing co-op with another player. If you both take too long to finish a level then two Skels will appear – one for each brother. If one brother is caught and killed, when they're put back into the game it is possible for them to smash into and kill their opponent's Skel while temporarily invincible.




## TOP TECHNIQUES

Experienced players have discovered some useful bubble techniques to help them get around and eke out more secrets and points. Here are our favourites.

## POWER-UP! MODE

To access unlimited run and rapid bubble blowing abilities simply input **Left - Jump - Left - 1P - Left - Fire - Left - 1P** at the title screen. A message in the bottom left corner of the screen will appear to tell you the cheat has been activated.




## KISSING

This is the act of blowing a bubble when an enemy is a mere cat's whisker away. Though an incredibly risky strategy, as you have to time it just right, it will encase and pop an enemy in one quick move – thus giving the impression you've kissed it to death. This is a great technique for clearing screens full of rapid, erratic monsters.




## THE TREASURE ROOMS EXPLAINED

**There are three** treasure rooms in *Bubble Bobble*, but you only need to enter the first to unlock the true ending. All are accessed by reaching their respective room without losing a life. Doing so opens up a door on the stage leading to a room full of jewels and a secret message made up of symbols that can be deciphered using an alphabet key.



### ROOM 20

Displays the secret message: **'If you want to become the old figure, use the power of your friendship, and fight with me!'** This basically explains that for the boys to return back to their normal human selves they need to complete the game together.



### ROOM 30

Displays the secret message: **'I enclose these magical medicine here, because those are my worst fears.'** It explains that the boys have to use a special power to defeat Super Drunk; lightning bolt icons enable the boys to blow lighting bubbles.



### ROOM 40

Displays the secret message: **'You want to get back your love of truth you must help each other until the last.'** Just reiterates the point that to truly finish the game players have to work together to defeat Super Drunk. Yeah, we got it first time, thanks.

## BUBBLE RIDING

Bubbles cannot hold the weight of Bub and Bob but can be used as a means to bump the brothers skyward. By holding down the jump button, it's possible to repeatedly bounce from a single bubble and potentially ride it all the way to the top.




## BUBBLE CLIMBING

A slight adaption of the bubble-riding technique, climbing sees players basically blowing and jumping onto bubbles at the same time, to effectively create makeshift bubble scaffolding, which can be used to reach high areas more quickly.




## FREE POINTS

Each bubble pop awards you ten points, so to earn some free points simply stand by a wall and blow bubbles against it. This trick can be used to manipulate the end score of a round. Finishing a room with a pair of like 100 and 10 digits (for instance: 657**55**0) will see the remaining bubbles left on-screen turn into 700-point bonus items.




# THE SPECIALIST

We speak to the current Bubble Bobble high score champ, Olly Cotton…




**Tell us a bit about your relationship with the *Bubble Bobble* coin-op…**

I first played *Bubble Bobble* around 1988, I think. I grew up with a great arcade two minutes from my house which had it. I found that I was good enough to make my 20p last half an hour or more, and could get almost a day's worth of play for a quid. The arcade kept the *Bubble Bobble* cab right up until it closed, 12 or so years ago, and I tried to buy it from them but was too late sadly.

After watching *King Of Kong* a few years ago I thought I'd have a look and see what the official high score was. It turned out my old scores weren't far off the record so I looked for an arcade cabinet and found one locally without much trouble. However, once I started looking for the original PCB I discovered it was actually quite rare and expensive. After a few months, I finally tracked one down in the US for a good price and it arrived the day before my wedding last year, so it's easy to remember.

**How long did it take you to reach your current high score score of 6,060,730?**

I started practicing properly in August last year, and figured out how to safely beat each of the levels without dying. After a few months I was able to loop the game and get very close to the record. I was visiting the Arcade Barn in Exeter last November and the guys there wanted to see all the levels done – it turned out to be my best game ever and I unexpectedly ended up beating the record. I knew then I could do it, and started to record every game I played. I finally managed to beat it on a quiet rainy afternoon in February.

**Tom Gault's record had stood for several years. Why do you think it took someone so long to beat it?**

I found there is a kind of score 'cut-off' point where it's fairly easy to get the first three or four million but tough to go above that, as you are usually on the later levels where dying means losing all your power-ups where you really need them. I've only actually beaten that score twice, and never bettered my record. It can get very intense when you get that far in to the game, as the special items disappear almost immediately and the enemies come out of the bubbles quickly.

**How and where did you register your high score?**

I have a cab in my home office (much to my wife's disgust!) so could get in a game most days, which is where I set the record. Once I had the recording of the score I sent it off to Twin Galaxies and it was verified about a week later.

**How good are you at the arcade sequels – *Rainbow Islands, Bubble Symphony,* and *Bubble Memories*?**

I hadn't heard of *Symphony* or *Memories* until I started trying to find the *Bubble Bobble* PCB, so made sure to grab them when I saw the pair come up for sale. *Symphony* is a fantastic game, but I'm not actually very good at it as some of the mechanics have changed from the original game. *Rainbow Islands* was next to *Bubble Bobble* in my local arcade for a while, so I got pretty good at that one too. I can get to the end on a credit with my current best score being about 15 million, and I'm aiming for the 'perfect game' (all diamonds in the right order on every island, no lives lost) but haven't managed it yet!

CLASSIC GAMING ON A BUDGET

# CHEAP AS CHIPS

## DUNE II: THE BATTLE FOR ARRAKIS



**Though Westwood Studios' magnificent RTS wasn't the first example of the genre, it's easily the most important, introducing mechanics that would be used both by Westwood and other studios for years to come.**

Set in Frank Herbert's sci-fi world, *Dune II* is a world away from the original PC game – itself loosely based on both Herbert's novel and David Lynch's movie starring Sting and Kyle MacLachlan – taking the form of an immersive adventure with real-time strategy elements.




INFO

- **SYSTEM:** PC DOS
- **RELEASED:** 1992
- **PUBLISHER:** VIRGIN
- **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** AMIGA, MEGA DRIVE




» [PC] Copy protection is built into the game. Early on, you're accused of spying and must answer questions from the manual.

Westwood Studios took a different approach with its sequel, and while the political elements that had made the original novel so gripping remained, they were instead woven into *Dune II*'s story. This enabled Westwood to focus primarily on combat for its slick sequel, and it proved to be a wise decision, with its innovative approach to the RTS genre not only defining *Dune II* as a game, but also shaping the RTS landscape forever.

*Dune II* introduced resource gathering, a world map where you chose your next mission, mobile units that could be deployed as buildings, simple construction rules for bases and units, and much more. Despite all these new gameplay mechanics, it was amazingly easy to pick up, thanks to clear, concise instructions that – along with the excellent mouse controls – made manipulating your various squads and buildings straighforward.

As with many similar games, the vast majority of each map in *Dune II* is covered by the 'fog of war', a black cloud of darkness that shrouds both any unexplored terrain and opposing enemy forces. The only way to circumvent it is to travel into these dark areas. Sure, you'll claim more ground – essential for mining the spice that fuels your resource building – but you'll also be entering unknown territory that could, and often did, hold all manner of nasty surprises. It's a well-worn, clever mechanic that genuinely made you want to uncover the entire world map, if only to make sure that your clever opponent never managed to get the drop on you.

And they often would, because the AI of *Dune II* was of an extremely high standard, offering a stiff challenge that made you feel like you earned every victory. Longevity is also bolstered due to all of the three competing houses having a unique unit, which can radically change they way you approach new scenarios. It's an excellent system that makes a difference to the way each story thread plays out, and yet another innovative idea in a game notable for its original approach.

The real beauty of Westwood's creation is that, even when relying on well-worn mechanics, the sheer amount of care and attention the developer bestowed on *Dune II* made every aspect of the game feel fresh, new and exciting.







## HOUSE CALL

We take a look at Dune's three battling houses

### HOUSE ATREIDES




House Atreides rules the water planet of Caladan and is founded on honour and loyalty. Previously, it has been embroiled in a millennia-long feud with House Harkonnen, and is the noblest of *Dune II*'s three competing in-game houses. Its primary house colours are black and green and its symbol is the hawk. Its Mentat (advisor) is named Cyril and it specialises in the use of Fremen and Sonic Tanks.

### HOUSE ORDOS




House Ordus is unique, as it's not found in any of Frank Herbert's novels. It hails from the ice world of Draconis IV and specialises in the use of forbidden technologies. Its Mentat advisors often disappear under 'mysterious circumstances'. Its current Mentat is Ammon. Its primary house colours are blue and gold, but its emblem changes from game to game. It specialises in Deviators, Raider Trikes and Saboteurs.

### HOUSE HARKONNEN




In addition to being extremely powerful, House Harkonnen is also famed for its brutality, hatred and malevolence, particularly towards House Atreides. Hailing from the volcanic wastelands of Giedi Prime, its primary house colour is red and its emblem is an evil-looking ram's head. Its current Mentat is Radnor and it specialises in the use of Devastators and deadly Death Hand Missiles.

# ALIEN TRILOGY




## IN THE KNOW

» **PUBLISHER:** ACCLAIM
» **DEVELOPER:** PROBE ENTERTAINMENT
» **RELEASED:** 1995
» **PLATFORM:** PC, PSONE, SATURN
» **GENRE:** FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER

With Aliens: Infestation and the upcoming Colonial Marines putting Alien back on the gaming radar, Dave Cook speaks to the team behind a tie-in that defied convention and perfectly captured the tone of a derelict space colony gone terribly wrong



» [PC] Walking too close to a Facehugger will result in a nasty close-up of the alien's anatomy, as well as a slight health drain.





## BREAKING THE HABIT

THE *ALIEN* IP has enjoyed a smooth transition to the game format when compared to many movie licences out there. One of the exceptions to the tie-in curse is Probe's very own take on *Alien 3*, a game that bears many similarities to *Contra*, and with a brutal difficulty curve to match. The best version for many is the 1993 Mega Drive build, which includes dark visuals, a creepy tone and considerably more firepower and xenomorphs than David Fincher's negatively received movie. Other notable *Alien* releases include Sega's frantic 1993 lightgun arcade title *Alien 3: The Gun*, Capcom's 1994 arcade brawler *Alien vs Predator*, and, of course, Rebellion's much-loved Atari Jaguar shooter *Alien vs Predator*. Rebellion's blaster initially launched on Atari's machine in 1994, but many still consider the studio's 1999 PC follow-up, *Aliens Versus Predator*, to be the pinnacle of *Alien* games.



**"They're coming outta the walls! They're coming outta the goddamn walls!" While Bill Paxton's swaggering jarhead Hudson was referring to the attacking xenomorph horde in 1986 action flick *Aliens*, his ranting could just as easily apply to the barrage of lazy movie games that launch each year. The process of knocking together a lazy hatchet job of a game, slapping a movie logo on the case, then charging over the odds for the privilege isn't a new trend, nor is it going away any time soon, but every so often a game comes along that dares to be different.**

Released in 1995 in the US and in both Europe and Japan the following year, Probe Entertainment's commercial smash *Alien Trilogy* shook off the creative restrictions that come with movie scripts and went beyond the original source material, resulting in an experience that, while bearing all the aesthetic quality of the films, tried to deliver something fresh and unique.

The project was helmed by then-designer Matthew Nagy, who cut his teeth at Probe with another movie game developed in tandem with the *Alien* licence, *Die Hard Trilogy*. "That title was my first game design. We looked at a few arcade classics to get the gameplay basics and then used the movie plotlines to make the mechanics for each section. I applied the same principle for *Alien Trilogy*, and because the movies are so atmospheric, we wanted to make an eerie game that frightened you. We wanted you to jump, so that the first time a Facehugger came on screen and sucked at your face, it would be enough to get any gamer slightly panicked. It was great to watch people cold testing the game, and it gave us many a chuckle."

> "Because the movies are so atmospheric, we wanted to make an eerie game that frightened you"

Despite the name, the plot of *Alien Trilogy* bore only slight resemblances to the film canon. Ellen Ripley served as the player character, although rather than retelling her origins as warrant officer of the Nostromo in the first movie, Ripley was depicted as a fully fledged member of the Marine Corps. Other series hallmarks such as the titular aliens, infested colonies and mention of the Weyland-Yutani Corporation allowed the team enough space to deviate from the established series and get inventive without creating something that felt detached from the licence.

"We were grateful we could deviate from the plotlines," says Matthew. "It's hard to make games based on movies that have already been out for a number of years as there's no mystery left. Everyone's seen the films, so you ideally want to give them a new plotline." While the concept of creating something new from existing source material may have proved to be daunting for some, Matthew and his team started and completed the game in just over a year, which is no small feat.

"From the point I came on, it took 15 months to get the game completed, and at that point there was no design at all – just the idea of creating an FPS title, the opening cinematic and a lot of tech. I had to make the game design document first, and I gleaned from the movies as much as possible, then moved on to designing levels on paper, as well as helping the guys get around technical restrictions as we progressed. It was awesome seeing it all come together, watching the feel of the movie getting captured in the artwork, then watching it manifest on screen and become playable."

The atmosphere was indeed true to the dark, dank nature of the LV-426 colony, as depicted on the big screen in James Cameron's sequel *Aliens*; the prison facility from *Alien 3*; and, finally, the mysterious crashed spacecraft from the beginning of the first film. The claustrophobic corridors smacked of *Doom*'s labyrinthine stages, except the low visibility and erratic lighting helped make for a much more unsettling experience. The tone was topped off by the familiar, piercing sound of Ripley's motion scanner. Probe's inclusion of



# ALIEN TRILOGY

## STAND-UP FIGHT OR BUG HUNT?

NEXT ON THE *Alien* tie-in slate is Gearbox's *Aliens: Colonial Marines*, a project that has been in development for what feels like an incredibly long time. Given the harsh learning curve experienced by both Matthew and Ben, we asked them what Gearbox will have to bear in mind to create a title that feels as authentic as their very own project.

Matthew believes it's a question of tension: "As long as they keep the atmosphere, and the level of surprise on the player, such as the suspense of what's around the next corner, then I'm sure they'll do a good job."

Ben takes the same stance: "From the point of view of an artist, it's simple – focus on the atmosphere, the lighting and the overall sense of claustrophobia and terror that the films are so great at conveying. I'm sure they'll do a great job on the game and I look forward to playing it."






» [PC] Just as android Ash turned on the Nostromo crew in the first film, the colony is overrun by aggressive synthetics.

this chilling radar device was certainly a masterstroke, and the perfect way to make the shooter all the more gripping.

Assisting Matthew in realising this terrifying vision was Ben McGrath, one of the talented artists who distilled the experience down to a level that relied on a sustained sense of terror, rather than cheap scare tactics used by all too many horror titles today. "With a franchise like *Alien* the art direction is so clearly defined that it's easy to see where you need to take the visuals," Ben explains. "Our job was really to translate the art from one medium to another. We sat there with VCRs and went through the films, taking screenshots of every set design, logo, weapon and so on. I must have watched all three films frame-by-frame multiple times."

The dedication of Ben and the rest of the art team was underlined by the transition in technology being felt by the industry, following the advent of PlayStation hardware. With Sony offering studios more technical clout than the 16-bit era, fully grasping the possibilities of what could be achieved




on the new hardware resulted in a few teething problems at Probe.

"I think the biggest challenge we faced was that *Alien Trilogy* was both the first 3D title and the first PlayStation game that most of the team had worked on," says Ben. "At that point in time console development was going through a huge technology shift, and many of the experienced staff from the 2D days didn't want to learn 3D, and decided to move into handheld development where their skills would still be valid. Team sizes had increased dramatically – although they were still nothing compared to what we see today – which introduced the need for more specialists than had been seen before."

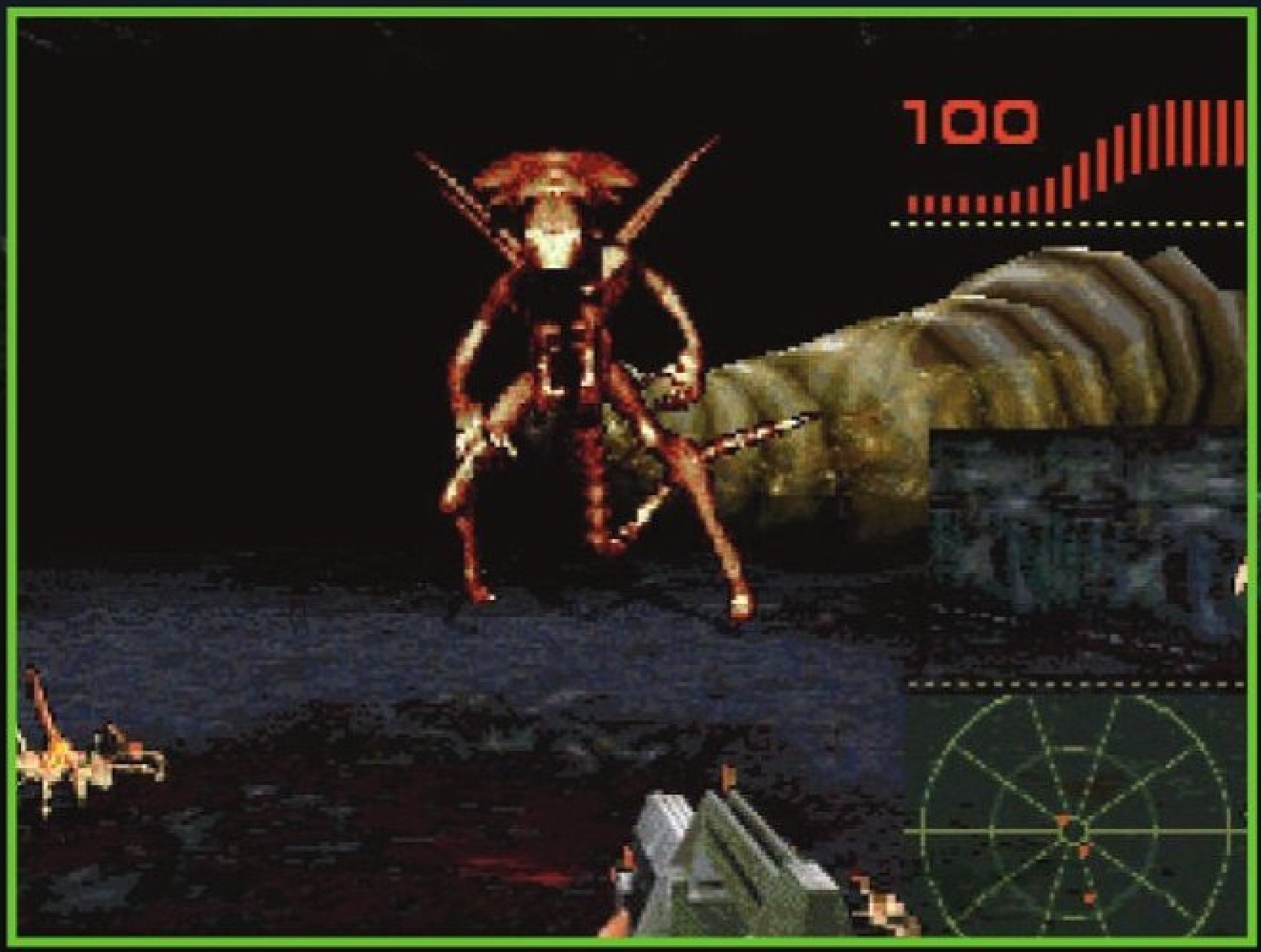
With the drive to succeed and the manpower to finish the job in place, the next challenge for Ben was purely technical, as the scope of the project at such an early stage in PlayStation development demanded the creation of bespoke tech and skills. "The tools we used to make the game had to be figured out from scratch, as there were no industry standards. The modelling was done on Silicon Graphics machines, all the textures were created in Photoshop on Mac, and the coders had to write a custom tool that allowed us to map textures and status attributes onto the models."

On the subject of the game's atmospheric lighting, Ben and his colleagues made the effect possible by entering into a complicated but entirely worthwhile process that was derived from bas-relief art styles – an effective way of achieving striking depth – which is a perfect fit for the first-person nature of *Alien Trilogy*. "Most of the lighting was actually rendered directly into the texture maps," Ben explains. "We drew bas-relief versions of every wall and floor panel by hand, layered on surface details from photographic material and then rendered them using the lighting filters in Photoshop. The results were pretty impressive for the time."

As powerful as it was, the PlayStation hardware still presented a few headaches for Probe, many of which were felt directly by Ben. "The texture warping on the PlayStation was really hard to live with. Basically it didn't do perspective correction on triangles as they passed near the clip plane, which is perhaps easier described as them coming 'through' the screen. That caused a lot of visual problems, so we spent a long time trying to keep horizontal lines out of our textures until the coders wrote something that chopped up the triangles as they got closer to the camera. That mitigated the problem and we could start doing a lot more with the textures."

Through the entire process, both Matthew and Ben rarely had contact with the licence-holders at Fox, something that removed an unnecessary number of fingers from a project that was making considerable headway given the size of the task at hand. Even simple asset inclusions from the films, such as the

» [PC] The Alien Queen serves as the boss of each of the three acts. She's fast, powerful and vicious, meaning you'll need to unload everything you've got into her to survive.






rasp of Ripley's devastating pulse rifle, the design of the aliens themselves, or the familiar settings required little in the way of moderation from Fox.

Ben can't recall a single instance where any of his team's designs had to be pre-approved before use, and similarly, Matthew remembers a notably hands-off approach from the film company. "You know, I was extremely lucky as I never had to get approvals from Fox," he explains, "which was perhaps because I stepped in when I did and a lot of the work had already been done, or maybe because the initial 'Stinger' concept video was so good and captured *Alien* so well. Unlike *Die Hard Trilogy*, Fox were very hands-off with *Alien Trilogy* because unlike that first project, they were the co-publisher; on *Alien* the licensing deal went through Acclaim, and Fox dealt with them rather than Probe directly."

The completed *Alien Trilogy* release ended up receiving a mixed to positive critical reaction at the time. While a handful of critics grew tired of the weak signposting, familiar environments and routine objectives, the gaming press at large reacted positively. If anything, the disorienting, dark environs helped create a feeling of being trapped, an aesthetic highlighted further by swarms of aliens, Facehuggers and demented android attackers baying for Ripley's blood. As a companion piece to the movie canon, the game can most certainly be considered a success.



» [PC] Each stage is littered with switches, but poor signposting means that it's never quite clear what they do.



» [PC] The second act throws more gun-toting enemies into the mix, demanding a more strategic approach.

Regardless, the game went on to join the ranks of Sony's Platinum range, and ports were developed for DOS and Sega's Saturn, both of which perfectly captured the same values as the original version. Although Probe's game was met with great commercial success, a sequel was never commissioned, a move that is almost unheard of today when movie licences are involved. Ben explains: "It was well known during development that the licence would expire shortly after we'd released the game, so a sequel was never really considered. In hindsight it would have made a lot of sense for the same core team to carry on making FPS games, but back then every game you made was in a different genre. We all got split up and went to work on Probe's other projects."

Matthew believes that *Alien Trilogy*'s Platinum status stands as a fitting reward for the hard graft displayed by his tireless team. "I was over the moon at how well *Alien* did. I was really proud of the game and what we achieved given the timeline. Back then, I was young and naive and didn't really think about how many units it would sell. My attitude throughout the project was to refrain from using the movie as a crappy skin that could fit over a platform game, but to try and tailor the game's genre and gameplay to match the films effectively. Then I wanted us to borrow as much as we could from the movies to create unique gameplay mechanics that not only suited the licence, but would deliver great entertainment value to the player. Later, as I became more business-savvy, I would look back at what we did with both *Die Hard* and *Alien* and smile, as I still love both of those games and think they stand the test of time."

## "Many of the experienced staff from the 2D days didn't want to learn 3D, and decided to move into handheld development where their skills would still be valid"





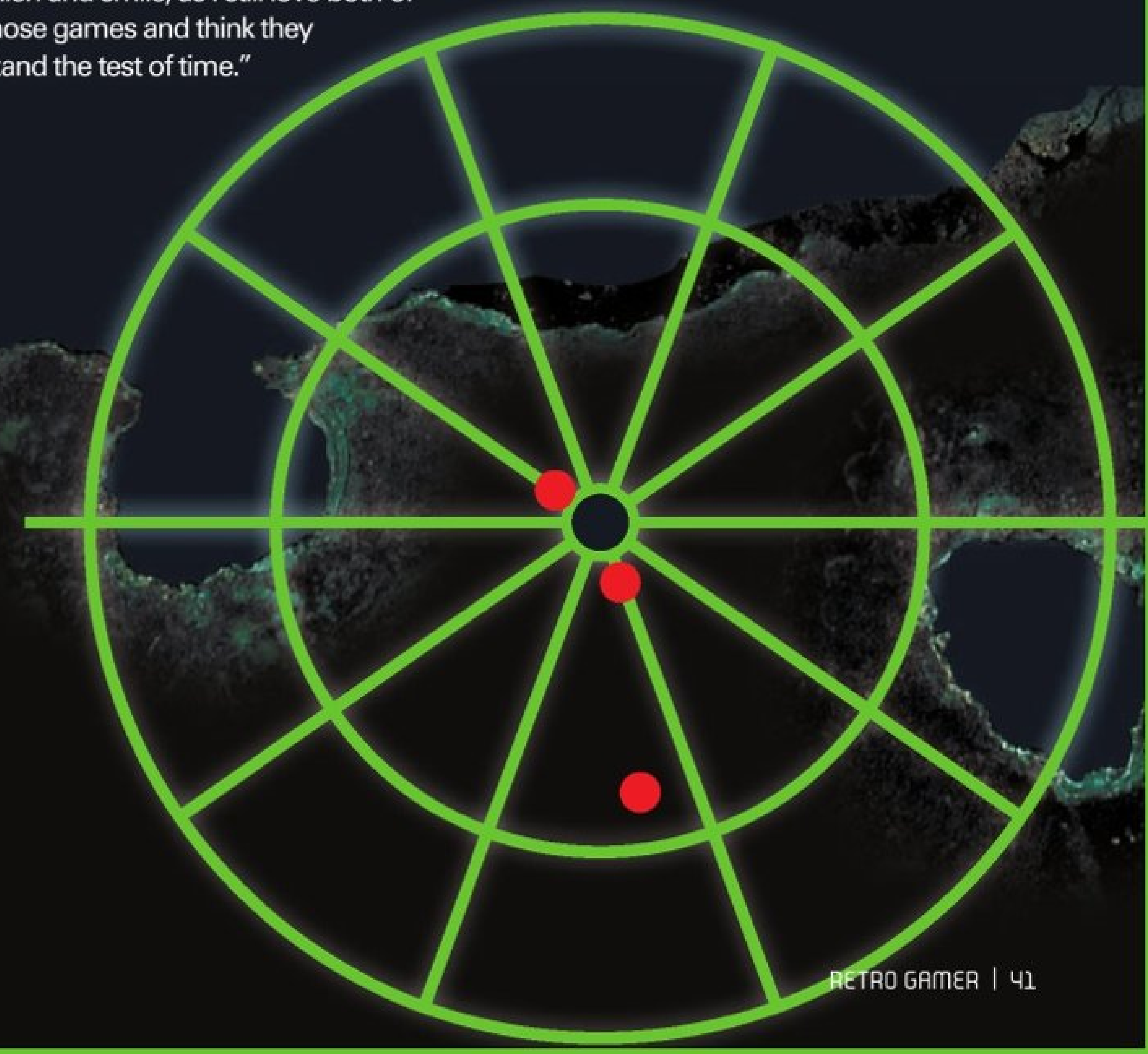
## DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

**MORTAL KOMBAT** (PICTURED)
**SYSTEM:** MEGA DRIVE
**YEAR:** 1993

**MORTAL KOMBAT II**
**SYSTEM:** MEGA DRIVE
**YEAR:** 1994

**DIE HARD TRILOGY**
**SYSTEM:** PSONE
**YEAR:** 1996



# Future Classic

*Modern games you'll still be playing in years to come*







### INFO

- **Featured System:** Xbox
- **Year Released:** 2005
- **Publisher:** Atari
- **Developer:** Quantic Dream
- **Key People:** David Cage (director), Guillaume de Fondaumière (executive producer)

### GO DEEPER

- **The title was changed to *Indigo Prophecy* in the US, apparently to prevent confusion with Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11*.**
- **An in-game news story mentions Quantic Dream's previous game, *Omikron: The Nomad Soul*.**



# 15. FAHRENHEIT

***The game that bridged the gap between point-and-click adventures and modern videogame storytelling, Fahrenheit was a bold step forward in interactive narrative…***

### THE BACKGROUND

Upon completing his first game, the acclaimed *The Nomad Soul*, David Cage began to speculate about why the evolution of videogames was limited to technology, and didn't spread to the concepts behind them, which he perceived as being pretty much the same since he was a teenager. The idea behind *Fahrenheit* was to tell a story in 50 scenes that could be moulded to the player's will, with situations they tackled using instincts and decision-making skills.

He also expressed frustration at videogame narratives being among the least-developed ideas in game design – *Fahrenheit* would show publishers and gamers how actually engaging with the characters creates a powerful connection to the gameplay. Building a control scheme based around tactile movement of the analogue sticks known as MPAR (Motion Physical Action Reaction – sigh), this particular design choice sought to let players lose themselves in the story and not be burdened by control mapping that had to be learned or practised.

To help sell the atmosphere of the story – a seemingly innocent man, Lucas Kane, murders someone under supernatural circumstances against the backdrop of a noir-esque New York – the developer enlisted the talents of Angelo Badalamenti in his first game project, after working on treasured David Lynch projects like *Blue Velvet* and *Twin Peaks*. Vivendi initially picked the game up for release, but this quickly changed behind the scenes. When Atari grabbed the game in a publishing deal, both feedback and money came from the company to help Quantic Dream round off the project to its satisfaction.

### THE GAME

About a third of the way into *Fahrenheit*, there's a sequence where detective Carla Valenti heads to a firing range to question a former detective about a case. During it, almost as an aside, as a means of getting him to talk, you take control and play as Carla in an arcade-style FPS mini-game. Mechanically, it's as familiar as any bare-bones FPS since *Quake*,

## Things of note




### Hitchcockian
In a probable nod to Hitchcock appearing in his own films, David Cage introduces the tutorials, immediately breaking the fourth wall before the game begins.



### Lukewarm coffee
*Fahrenheit* has both in-game nudity and sex scenes, although they're admittedly done in a pretty contrived way for a game that otherwise targets a mature audience.



### Games within games
Boxing and basketball are two examples of the QTEs used for out-of-story fun. You're using the same control scheme, but the changing context makes all the difference.



### Catching yourself out
Another fantastic idea is creating a likeness of Lucas for the police to use, as part of their investigation in the game. It bites you in the ass later on if you're too accurate.



### Story, evolved
Without *Fahrenheit* there wouldn't be *Heavy Rain*, Quantic Dream's 2010 follow-up that built on many of the previous game's ideas – with more story and less gameplay.


» [Xbox] Swapping between the two detectives creates interesting branching story paths.


» [Xbox] The typical creepy old lady, Agatha, reminds us of that woman in *The Simpsons* who yells 'Behold! The ravages of age!'




## What the press thought



**games™**
**Score: 8/10**
"*Fahrenheit* is a mature, absorbing videogame, the likes of which we see all too rarely."

**1Up**
**Score: B+**
"If it was a book you'd call it 'a real page-turner'; it can be nigh-impossible at points to put down. As the credits roll, you'll remember the poignant moments as part of the story, not the actions you took…"

but the way it's presented as an organic part of *Fahrenheit*'s complex story feels refreshing. On one level, you're shooting enemies to get a high score, but on another, you're being fed a story through this style of play; depending on how you do, the cop you're questioning will comment on your performance. And this is just one small part of the game.

That's the true merit of *Fahrenheit* – you reach the next scene and there's usually something else you haven't seen before, or, better yet, something you've seen in a videogame loads of times, used in a way you've never experienced until then.

In *Fahrenheit*, we're absorbed by the small moments of the story, as well as being shocked by the bigger events. With meters displaying the psychological condition of each character – would-be killer Lucas Kane and the two detectives, Carla Valenti and Tyler Miles – every decision contributes to the overall make-up of the characters, even if it's just in a tiny way. The way *Fahrenheit* takes the mundane parts of life and gives them significance really grounds you in the lives of the characters; this means that when it comes to those moments like the shooting gallery, or any of the extensive life-and-death hallucinations of Lucas, we're able to feel connected to the situation, which we perhaps wouldn't even in the best games that neglect narrative.



Later on, the *Fahrenheit* tale swerves into utterly bizarre territory involving ancient orders and even otherworldly life, yet, even then, it's intense and engaging, because you've never had anything like it before. The story is a diamond in the rough, but the interaction, and the way that's used, is so broadly experimental that *Fahrenheit* absolutely still deserves our attention, especially given how refined and readily available the Xbox port is. *Fahrenheit* built on the foundations of the point-and-click genre, took a stroke of inspiration from Lynch films and offered solutions to lots of issues associated with videogame storytelling. It also gave us a few new problems. But, in a landscape of mostly identikit sequels and prominent licensed games, at the very least it started conversations about what the role of the interactive narrative could be.

### Why it's a future classic
While the world of motion capture has changed the way stories in videogames are presented, letting them get closer to the likes of movies and TV shows, it's *Fahrenheit*'s fascinating relationship with gaming as we understand it that means it's worthy of Future Classic status. It turns things we see as being the point of playing games into fractions of a larger story, where every interaction has a psychological effect on each character. More than that, though, it's highly intelligent in the way it brings its strands together, and the way players can have entirely different experiences and discuss how their game turned out.

This kind of sophistication still isn't commonplace in videogames – usually, decisions are moral-based and arbitrary, but *Fahrenheit* wants to show you that everything matters, and that it can't just be measured by a couple of outcomes. As we live through Lucas, Tyler and Carla, we're made to feel consequences, and these can sometimes be as simple as listening to a friend over a bottle of wine or being honest with a character. It's still a hugely refreshing experience.



# evil rises

## the story of resident evil

**Capcom's Resident Evil series is one of the most famous in videogames, having spawned everything from action figures to Hollywood blockbusters. But the story behind the franchise is more intriguing and fantastical than any of its fictions: it's a story of determination, jealousy, bankruptcy and people pushed to the limit. Steve Burns welcomes you back to the world of survival-horror**

**Osaka, Japan, early 1996. It was gone three AM in the long abandoned cubicles and halls of Capcom's HQ, but work was by no means finished. Still prowling the corridors was a young Shinji Mikami: director of Capcom's new *Resident Evil* project, drinker of too much beer, and worker of too many hours. With the nascent *Resident Evil* racing to a hugely-pressurised conclusion, Mikami had been doing this for months, attempting to balance not just his own perfectionist expectations but those of Capcom as well. As Mikami and his and his team crunched – not for the first night and not for the last, working 18-hour days and indulging in deskchair chariot races after hours to stay sane – 1994 must've seemed a long time ago.**

Then, Mikami had just a handful of licensed Disney games and a scrapped F1 title under his belt. Soon his spirits would be lifted when he was approached by Capcom general manager Tokoru Fujiwaru, to create a game that could carry on the legacy of *Sweet Home*, Capcom's 1989 NES horror adventure. Mikami was intrigued and agreed, borrowing some of that game's finer touches (the door-opening screens, for example) for Capcom's newest IP: *Biohazard*, or *Resident Evil* in the West thanks to the band Biohazard owning the copyright for the original title. It would tell the tale of playable characters Chris Redfield and Jill Valentine, as well as the rest of the 'STARS' counter-terrorist unit, fighting for their lives in a huge mansion filled with tricks, traps and what would become *Resident Evil*'s trademark bad-science monstrosities, while uncovering the growing conspiracy that shrouded the Umbrella pharmaceutical company's virus research.

Mikami wanted to instil players with fear, and had originally toyed with the idea of a more ▶

supernatural angle for the horrors found in the Spencer Mansion, like in *Sweet Home*. Eventually, he settled on slightly more grounded approach that suited the paramilitary STARS unit and their fighting abilities.

"I wanted an atmosphere found in the film *Jaws*, where the player was in danger, but still capable of dealing with it," he stated in the book *The True Story Behind Resident Evil*. "In short, I wanted the player to make clear decisions while they experienced much fear… pursued not by something supernatural, but something concrete."

From this decision, the rest of the project took shape. *Sweet Home* would provide the basis for the secluded mansion setting and the delightfully wacky, completely ludicrous puzzles that broke up the action. Mikami loved Romero's 'Dead' films, and for him the zombie was the perfect enemy: physical, killable, but capable of projecting the right amount of 'the fear' in the way they endlessly stalked their prey.

Mikami was also fortunate with Fujiwaru's timing: 'next generation' consoles such as the PlayStation were on the horizon, and Mikami was grateful of the power they afforded, stating in *The Birth of Resident Evil* that, "This feeling of anxiety was realised with the assistance of the new generation of consoles (the PlayStation) that helped achieve the remarkable graphics. "

New consoles, however, would bring new challenges, and Mikami soon realised that his dream of creating *Resident Evil* in first-person was dead. This limitation would give rise to the famous pre-rendered backgrounds that gave *Resident Evil* its signature flavour (and also, out of necessity, its terrible controls).

## "I wanted an atmosphere like Jaws, where the player is in danger but capable of dealing with it"

Things would get worse before they got better as the team size fluctuated, the deadline loomed and the pressure intensified. Capcom began to ask serious questions regarding the project. Was it financially viable? Would Capcom be sunk if the game flopped?

'Discontinue *Resident Evil* Project' was suggested by an external consultancy firm. Capcom certainly couldn't afford to go throwing good money after – allegedly – bad. *Resident Evil* was a make-or-break project for the house Hadoukens built. As so often happens in the series, the countdown to self-destruction had begun.

Things got even worse when studio boss Yoshiki Okamoto criticised *Resident Evil*'s controls and design, furiously demanding Mikami "doesn't put Capcom's name to shit like this," as recalled in *The True Story Behind Resident Evil*. Only the interjection of Fujiwara stopped the project from stalling.

Although Mikami had claimed that the interference from above and the exhausting -schedule had meant that he had "lost all interest in watching the game go on sale", *Resident Evil* would become a triumph, selling 600,000 units and making Mikami – and the game – big names. Finally, his "moment had come".

*Resident Evil* had become a phenomenon: George A Romero would go on to write a script for a movie adaptation, and direct a live-action Japanese advert for the game. It was impossible to open a videogame magazine between 1996-98 without reading about it. The hype train wasn't just rolling, it was out of control. *Resident Evil 2* had to be better than good. It had to be perfect.

Things got off to a shaky start in 1996 and nosedived from there. Jun Takeuchi stated in *The True Story Behind Resident Evil* that he wanted to "widen [*Resident Evil*'s] audience". The first *Resident Evil*, by Mikami's own admission, was made to be deliberately difficult, especially in the US, where it was made even tougher in an attempt to thwart the rental market. Mikami shared Takeuchi's ideal for broader audience reach, but also pondered that a member of his team had told him, "It is not that easy to attract a larger audience while not losing sight of the game's essence."

Mikami was burnt out after the first game, and soon found himself kicked upstairs to a producing role, a move that saddened him and



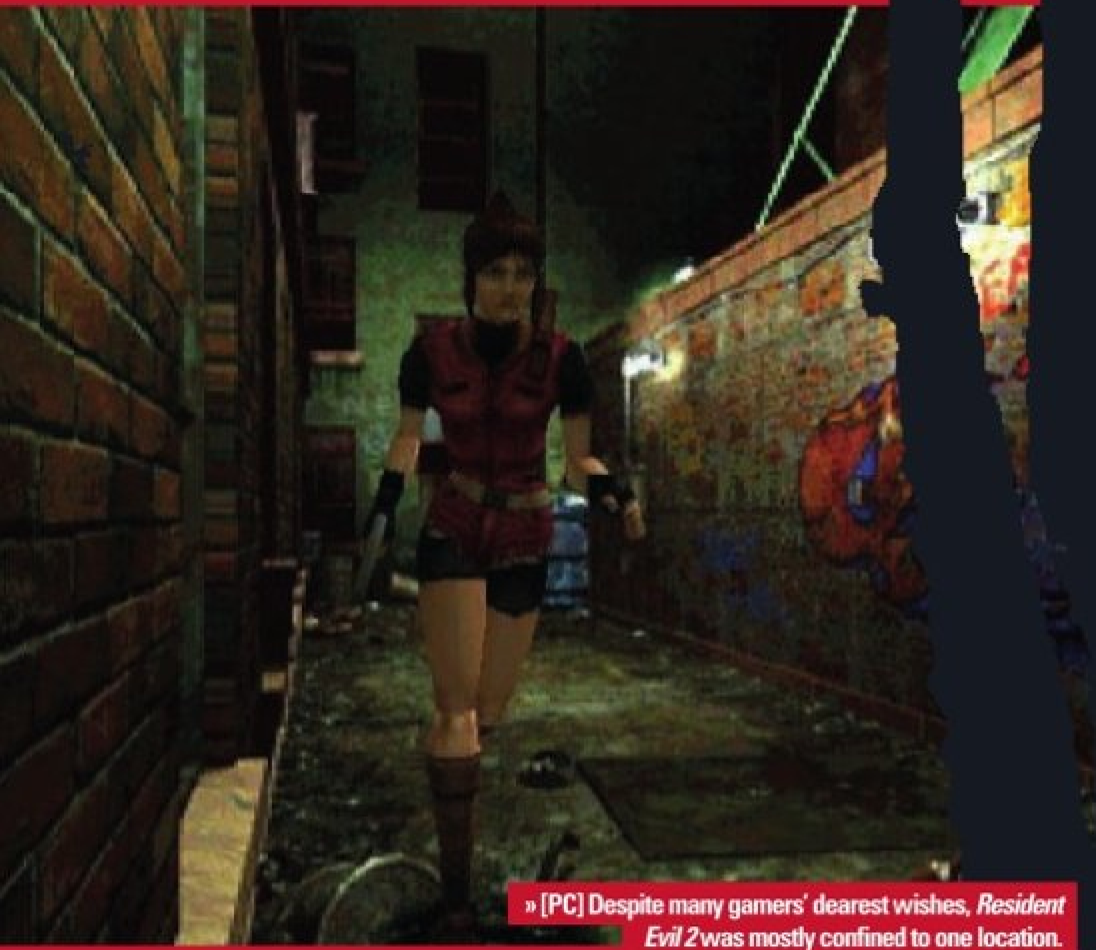
» [PC] Nemesis is a terrifying foe, more intelligent and far more resilient than anything seen up until that point in the series.



would go on to generate friction with new director Hideki Kamiya. To chronicle every step of what transpired in the *Resident Evil 2* project would require more pages than both this magazine and deforestation regulations permit, but there are key touchstones throughout development that crafted it into the experience we have today. First revealed in July 1996, *Resident Evil 2* looked impressive, if evolutionary. The tried-and-tested camera angles were still there; the happy accident of technological limitation that gave *Resident Evil* its moody panoramas and claustrophobic close-ups was still paying off. The outlandish puzzles still featured, breaking up the action nicely. And, of course, the characters still moved like tanks.

Everything else, however, had been kicked up a gear. The new characters (rookie cop Leon Kennedy and the ill-fated biker chick/college student Elza Walker, both caught in the outbreak sweeping Raccoon) weren't just the blank-faced mannequins they were before: now they reacted to damage, their clothes shredding at the teeth and claws of their enemies. Those hallowed steel-blue offices of the early versions would also suffer damage from the upgraded amount of enemies available on screen.

Anticipation grew as players dreamed of pitched battles in the streets of Raccoon City, but behind closed doors tensions were mounting. Mikami, still reeling from Kamiya taking the director's chair, began to attempt to influence the game directly. Worse still, Mikami envisioned the sequel would give closure to the universe, a notion ▶



» [PC] Despite many gamers' dearest wishes, *Resident Evil 2* was mostly confined to one location.

# The Beta Band

**A brief look at the many different versions of Resident Evil**

**More so than perhaps any other franchise in history, *Resident Evil* is famed for its betas and lost projects, due in part to both Capcom's willingness to change artistic direction and the vast differences between the versions. *Resident Evil 2* and *4* are obviously the most famously revised, but the series also features many little-known entities that are lost to time. Here are some of the most interesting…**

## Resident Evil

Although *Resident Evil*'s supernatural elements were cut early on, it's rumoured some versions did feature trace elements of this thinking. In one build, the player would pass walls where blood would form messages for the player.

Shockingly, Barry Burton also wasn't in the game to begin with. Instead we got Gelzer, a tank-like behemoth that would hold the ceiling from collapsing on Jill in the shotgun trap room. Elements of his character were eventually moulded into the Barry we all know and love. Another character not to make the cut was Dewey, who was to be a playable character unlocked after finishing the game, described by Mikami as an Eddie Murphy type who would provide comic relief.

Early footage showed Chris fighting the mutated snake Yawn in the shed that leads to the guardhouse. The shed was changed in the final release, and the battle removed, but the two exits on the beta map are still in place in the FMV that introduces the Hunter. In fact, the beast even enters through one of them in the video.






Early images circulated to certain games magazines showed that the game was playable in co-op (as shown at www.unseen64.net). Another build showed players swapping weapons in real time.

## Resident Evil 2

Originally, players would run into the support characters. Leon met cop Marvin Branagh and researcher Linda, while Elza had a guy named John and Sherry Birkin.

## Resident Evil 3

The opening of *Resident Evil 3* is different in earlier builds. Instead of showing Jill leaving her hotel and bursting onto the streets of Raccoon City, the beta shows a series of images of STARS members arguing with RPD Chief Irons, before showing Jill walking the wrecked streets of Racoon City.

## Resident Evil 4

In the demo for *Resident Evil 4* some unused items that didn't make it to the final cut are still there, including infrared goggles. Another beta shows other items in Leon's inventory, including a fish!

## Resident Evil 5

Chris's arms are much smaller than they are in the early trailers. Considering they're still the size of small nations, that's saying something.

Chris originally had a contextual duck manoeuvre for evading attacking foes, as seen in the first gameplay trailer. This was axed, with Kawata particularly displeased with its removal. It was originally implemented as a prototype, Kawata told us. "But it got removed as we implemented other controls and systems. That was an exciting and powerful gimmick, so I was also disappointed." The art style is also more subdued than in earlier versions. Whereas *Resident Evil 5* was originally going to be high-contrast with deep saturation, a more muted colour scheme was chosen for the final build.







» [GameCube] *Resident Evil 0* featured some innovations (the ability to drop items, real-time character swapping) but was still slavishly stuck to series conventions.



» [PlayStation] How many zombies have we killed in this corridor over the years? Thousands, probably.

that Okamoto sternly refused. Despite good progress being made on *Resident Evil 2* – the game was set to release in May 1997, and coverage in the games media had been slavering – Mikami pulled the plug, with estimates placing the game at over 60 per cent complete.

Mikami had decried *Resident Evil 1.5*, as it came to be known, for not meeting his high standards. The game's cold, *T2*–esque lighting and small police station setting didn't have the appropriate feel, and to this end the setting was rewritten externally, starting Capcom's relationship with scriptwriting firm Flagship. Not for the first time, and certainly not for the last, a *Resident Evil* game was going to have to be completely redesigned. Mikami took a back seat and allowed Kamiya to finish the game uninterrupted. Elza Walker morphed into Claire Redfield to establish continuity with the original game, and the Raccoon Police Department became a more Gothic environment.

Capcom apologised for the delay by releasing *Resident Evil: Director's Cut*, as Kamiya and the company crunched to get *Resident Evil 2* finished. Like Leon, Kamiya was a rookie, and like Leon he'd have to battle to make it out of *Resident Evil 2* in one piece.

Despite the crushing stress, *Resident Evil 2* was starting to come together in a way that *1.5* never could, with Kamiya remarking recently on his Twitter feed that the difference between the two versions was like "heaven and hell". *Resident Evil 2*'s innovative 'zapping' system, where scenarios for Leon and Claire would overlap or intertwine, lending the game replay value, was excellent. The game's action focus was turning it into a rip-roaring slice of entertainment, the same breed as its predecessor but distinctly different. If *Resident Evil* was *Alien*, the mansion the creaking Nostromo, a haunted house, then *Resident Evil 2* was *Aliens*, and Raccoon City was to be LV-426: this time it was war.

> **"It is not that easy to attract a larger audience while not losing sight of the game's essence"**

*Resident Evil 2* was an instant hit. For Mikami, however, the project would always be tinged with regret.

"My biggest disappointment was that [the higher-ups] made me be a producer, and that I had to step back from actual game development," he told 1Up.com. "When you're a director, you can really create the game you want to create hands-on, whereas when you're the producer you just kind of oversee it, so you kind of have to stand back and watch."

*Resident Evil 2*'s success was predictable: as the sequel to one of the highest-profile games in PlayStation history it was never going to fail. With *Resident Evil 3*, however, those assurances disappeared quicker than zombie









## How Remakes SHOULD be done

**A brief behind-the-scenes with Capcom's glorious GameCube remake**

**LONG BEFORE REMAKING old games for new consoles became the business plan du-jour for almost every major publisher, Capcom showed everyone how it should be done with the release of the *Resident Evil* remake in 2002. Using the GameCube's then-superior power, it was produced by Production Studio 4 and directed by Shinji Mikami.**

**_RE5_ co-producer Masachika Kawata was on board as well, and recalled to us the personal pressure that the project entailed.**

**"The decision was made right after finishing _Dino Crisis 2_. I went to work after a vacation and my boss told me that I was joining the project. I was overworking for years at that time so I was mentally exhausted.**

**"The environment was severe, so personally I do not have many happy memories in making this. I joined this project as the leader of the background designers, but I did not work as a design leader after this."**

**From this pressure, however, Capcom created diamonds. While most modern remakes are simply up-rezzed versions of the old game given a lick of paint (the recently released _Resident Evil 4_ HD being one), Capcom really went to town on the GameCube remake. The basic tenets were the same – guide Chris and Jill through the mansion, try not to get killed – and even the pre-rendered backdrops remained. However, thanks to the power of Nintendo's console, the game looked truly beautiful, and holds up to this day. The game also added personal defence weapons (grenades and knives that could be used to fend off zombies that had hold of the player), the new Crimson Head zombie that needed to be burned to be truly finished off, and the reinstatement of Trevor's Letters.**

**For the uninitiated, the letters were meant to serve as an explanation as to why such a stately mansion has so many bizarre and illogical traps and puzzles. A series of diary entries details the fate of architect George Trevor and his family as they visit Umbrella founder Ozwell E Spencer at the estate Trevor designed, and they're a grisly read as Spencer makes sure that he's the only one that knows the secret of the Arklay mansion. Throw in Lisa Trevor – the daughter of George who has been experimented on mercilessly for years and now cannot die – as a sub-boss and you've got a fascinating re-envisioning that deepens and enriches an already brilliant game.**

bodies when you leave and re-enter a room in any *Resident Evil* game. Directed neither by Mikami nor Kamiya, for most of its development *Resident Evil 3* wasn't going to be an fully-fledged sequel. Instead it was going to be a side-story, and bore the titles *Resident Evil 2.1* and *Resident Evil 1.9* during development. As ever, Okamoto had a say, re-instating the series to full-sequel status, and production came and went without much of a hitch. Despite the success of the game (it would go on to sell over 3 million copies), it is seen as the black sheep of the series – perhaps more so than even *Resident Evil 0*. Which is perhaps harsh, given it introduced new features such as the dodge move, 'Live Selection' events that enable you to shape your path through the game, and of course Nemesis, the persistent enemy that gives the game its unique *Terminator*-style flavour. *Code Veronica* too was successful, if derivative – reintroducing Wesker, Chris and Claire was a great idea, and the 3D backgrounds the Dreamcast afforded were much appreciated. Interestingly, rumours swirled that *Code Veronica* had actually started life as a PlayStation game before making the leap to the DreamCast. In an exclusive interview with **Retro Gamer**, *Resi 5* co-producer Masachika Kawata was cagey when asked if this was the case, simply stating "I don't know".

While *Resident Evil 3*, *Code Veronica* and *0* were all good games, they were sidesteps; evolutionary instalments rather than giant leaps forward. For that reason (and also those of time and space) **Retro Gamer** has opted to concentrate on what was to come. No matter how good the 'classic' gameplay may have been (and *CV* is excellent) many thought the series was simply repeating itself, literally in the case of the *Resident Evil* remake and more figuratively in *Resident Evil 0*. It was another romp through a dusty old building, in this case the Umbrella Training Facility next to the Spencer Mansion. Peer closer and you can see the wheels of change slowly grinding, with Capcom experimenting with real-time player switching and on the fly item dropping. For the most part, however, it was business as usual. To stay relevant, *Resident Evil* needed a rebirth, not just a remake, and it got it with *RE4*.

Hinted at in 1999, finally released in 2005 after four revisions (one of which was the uber-action, Gothic-drenched prototype that spawned the *Devil May Cry* series) *Resident Evil 4* set the standard for all action games to follow, but again its genesis was difficult and laborious, guided by Mikami's stubborn genius and a period of sharp introspection for the design team at Capcom. "The series had been recycling the same patterns, the same gameplay each time," producer Hiroyuki Kobayashi states on *The Making of Resident Evil 4*. "So I spoke to Mikami-san about reshaping the game, winning back the fans and winning new fans that would never play a *Resident Evil* game."

Mikami threw himself into the production with gusto. As part of the 'Capcom Five', an exclusive agreement between Capcom and Nintendo to put out five games on the GameCube system, Mikami was nothing if not zealous. He insisted that *Resident Evil 4* wouldn't appear on the PS2, threatening that 'he would cut his head off' if such a thing came to pass. Naturally, it did, but thankfully Mikami hasn't suffered a decapitation yet.

He approached the game with the same attacking instinct as he had the PR. In the director's chair that he so coveted, he began another reign of perfectionist terror. There was also the old pressure on his shoulders that he hadn't felt since the first game: Mikami knew that if *Resident Evil 4* hadn't been a hit, it would have been the end for the franchise he helped create. Yet another countdown had started. ▶





## Woah, this hall is dangerous!

### Finding out who wrote that dialogue…

NO HISTORY OF *Resident Evil* is complete without mention of the dialogue that has given us the fear over the years, and not always for the right reasons. The original game's dialogue was written in-house by Kenichi Iwao, and is rightly regarded as both the best and worst the series has to offer. Barry Burton got most of the best lines: who can forget classics such as 'You were almost a Jill sandwich', 'I hope this isn't Chris's blood' and 'The master of unlocking!' Sadly for everyone involved, *Resident Evil 2* saw the introduction of Capcom's relationship with Flagship, a company geared around improving the quality of game scripts. Founded by Noboru Sugimura and Yoshiki Okamoto (along with two others) after they had collaborated on putting *Resident Evil 2*'s script in order, the company would then advise on *Resident Evil 3*'s script (again written internally). Mikami would co-write *4*, before four different writers would collaborate on *Resident Evil 5*. Although sadly we don't know who wrote Albert Wesker's unintentionally dirty 'complete, global saturation' line. Unfortunately, Sugimura passed away in 2005, but his legacy still stands today.

# Who's the boss?

**Running down Resident Evil's best baddies**

## 5. Black Tiger Spider

**(RESIDENT EVIL, RESIDENT EVIL REMAKE)**

Nestled in the heart of the Spencer Estate's underground tunnel network, the Black Tiger Spider is easily defeated, but not so easily forgotten. Horrifying in the PSone original, heart-attack-inducing in the remake, the Black Tiger makes it onto this list for nearly killing arachnophobes everywhere.





## 4. Krauser vs. Leon

**(RESIDENT EVIL 4)**

Leon's showdown with his former partner is the pinnacle of *Resi 4*'s use of QTEs. A cinematic knife-fight, this highlights everything the game does well: a feeling of power, OTT action and the tension that comes from knowing death is around every corner.

## 3. Albert Wesker

**(RESIDENT EVIL 5)**

Chris and Sheva have to work together to take out the virus-enhanced madman in *Resident Evil 5*'s gripping finale. Nice mechanics – turning out the lights so he can't see you; teaming up to inject him with a strength-sapping serum – complement the satisfying feeling of finally kicking Wesker's ass.





## 2. Lisa Trevor

**(RESIDENT EVIL REMAKE)**

Lisa is horribly disfigured, and her mind has been savagely twisted after spending years being experimented upon by Wesker, Birkin and Spencer. Unkillable, there's a both a horrible feeling of helplessness and a twinge of compassion as she stalks you in the remake, begging for a death you can't give her. Absolutely chilling.

## 1. Nemesis

**(RESIDENT EVIL 3)**

If *Resident Evil 2* is akin to *Aliens*, then *3* is *The Terminator*: a lean chase movie with a villain that seemingly can't be stopped. Hearing his signature music, and seeing him cry 'STAAAAAARS!' is enough to send a chill down any gamer's spine, and he keeps on coming and coming…




▶ Mikami was ruthless with his changes. Those infamous door opening screens and fixed camera angles were ditched for a third-person, over-the-shoulder camera, and *Resident Evil 4*'s story featured an upgraded Leon on a mission to remote and rural Spain to rescue the US President's kidnapped daughter. Leon was a far cry from the foppish cop of *Resident Evil 2*: now he was all-action, diving out of windows and suplexing enemies like he was auditioning for WWE. Umbrella Corporation and the series-defining zombies were gone, replaced with rural, burlap-sack-wearing Spanish cult members and crazed yet intelligent parasitic mobs straight out of a Lucio Fulci movie. Mikami had evolved 'the fear' from survival-horror to 'panic action': less a focus on puzzles and hoarding ammo as it was negotiating the waves of devious foes.

Capcom needed to be bold in its changes; it was, and the rest is history. Kobiyashi would go on to call *Resident Evil 4* "the masterpiece of the series," because all the mechanics are as tuned, precise and as co-dependent on each other as the movement of the fine, expensive watches that Okamoto once insisted to 1Up.com that everyone wears at Capcom. In the years following its release, it became clear how much *Resident Evil 4* changed videogames. Suddenly, you could see *Resident Evil 4* everywhere. As if he needed to, Cliff Bleszinski told an audience at GDC 2007 that he used *RE4* as an inspiration for *Gears Of War*, specifically the pacing and the camera, and Visceral Games' *Dead Space* series is also heavily influenced.







» [PS2] *Code Veronica X* saw new cut-scenes added, including this *Matrix*-inspired fist fight between Wesker and Chris.




» [GameCube] One of the greatest openings of any game, *Resident Evil 4*'s really set the tone for the whole experience.



» [Xbox 360] Sheva's introduction in *Resident Evil 5* is fine in co-op, but her AI is too troublesome to make single-player anything other than a chore.

Its stupendous design had infected videogames, and its legacy was evolving. *Resident Evil 4* wasn't just an expertly-paced, relentlessly playable update of a decaying franchise: it had defined a genre, and continues to define it, with the over-the-shoulder view being its clear legacy.

Another rough ride then, but it was ultimately worth it. Fantastic sales had reinvigorated the series financially, but more importantly overwhelming critical acclaim had put the franchise back on the pedestal it had slid wearily off in years prior. *Resident Evil* was back. Mikami, however, wouldn't be. For those that had to produce the follow-up, old hands Jun Takeuchi and Masachika Kawata, there was surely no way to match *4*'s achievement. "We were under a lot of pressure," Kawata told **Retro Gamer** in an exclusive interview. "But we also got a lot of support."

The concept would see Chris Redfield return as the star, investigating *Resident Evil* outbreaks in Africa and eventually tying up his long-running feud with series antagonist Albert Wesker. He would be teamed with Sheva Alomar, a female soldier who would give the game its co-op partner. The production duo saw *Resident Evil 4*'s narrative as akin to a side-story, and were keen to bring things full circle. They also wisely kept the camera style and action focus of *4*, and decided early on – "right from the start", Takeuchi told Gamasutra – to focus on co-op play (although production director Yasuhiro Anpo contradicts him in the *Complete Official Guide Collector's Edition* by Piggyback, stating that *Resident Evil 5* was initially developed as a "single-player game"). Either way, co-op would be something the main series had never seen before.

The setting would be destined to reap the whirlwind of controversy, with Capcom being accused (and sternly refuting) accusations of racism, but Africa would offer the producers interesting new gameplay options. One of these would be the use of light and shadow, heat and shade. Originally, the light was to have a huge effect on the player, who would have to seek solace from the scorching sun, but the idea was dropped.

Takeuchi noted in an interview with *Famitsu*: "Until now, computer graphics have been very good at doing 'dark'... I've seen a lot of Western developers using light as a motif, and I'm always keeping my eye on many games. But I still believe we at Capcom are the best."

It's a telling statement, that of keeping an eye on Western developers, because Resident Evil 5 has been accused of both being in awe of Western design philosophy (co-op, a shoe-horned in cover system) and not changing enough with the times. Takeuchi and Kawata would describe the project as "extremely demanding on both a physical and psychological level" in Piggyback's *Complete Official Guide Collector's Edition* and Takeuchi noted to G4TV that his experiences on *Resident Evil 5* had gone some way to influencing his decision on whether or not to work on the next numbered title in the series. "Right now, pretty much every day myself, Kawata and another producer at Capcom Japan are ▶

> **"We were under a lot of pressure [on Resident Evil 5], but we also got a lot of support"**

## The Sound of Terror

WHILE *RESIDENT EVIL*'S dialogue may have been laughably bad since the outset, one aural element of the series that has always been first-class is the score Capcom uses to anchor its scares and give each *Resident Evil* its rich atmosphere.

Utter the name Masami Ueda to all but the most hardcore *Resident Evil* fans and you'll probably get a puzzled look in response, but anyone who has played the first three games would be able to identify work he collaborated on in a heartbeat. From the haunting-yet comforting melancholy of 'Peace Of Mind' (*Resident Evil*'s save room theme) to the terrifying strings of 'Night Of Day' (the mansion's second floor theme) and onto the relentless warcry beat of Nemesis's theme, Ueda and his contributors (including, but not limited to, *Viewtiful Joe* composer Akari Kaida) crafted just as much of *Resident Evil*'s mystique and intrigue as Mikami and company did.

Ueda stepped aside for *Resident Evil 4*, where the Spanish setting and new action focus called for a different vibe. Misao Senbongi took over, reflecting the drastic change of pace in the music. Senbongi wasted no time in driving home the differences, with the second piece from the game's score, 'First Contact'. It is composed of passionate singing, fast acoustic guitar and driving rhythmic beats, and underscores the cultural difference of Leon's adventure in remote and rural Spain.

*Resident Evil 5* saw Kota Suzuki take over as lead composer. For Takeuchi and Kawata, the recording of the score was a reminder of just how big the franchise had become.

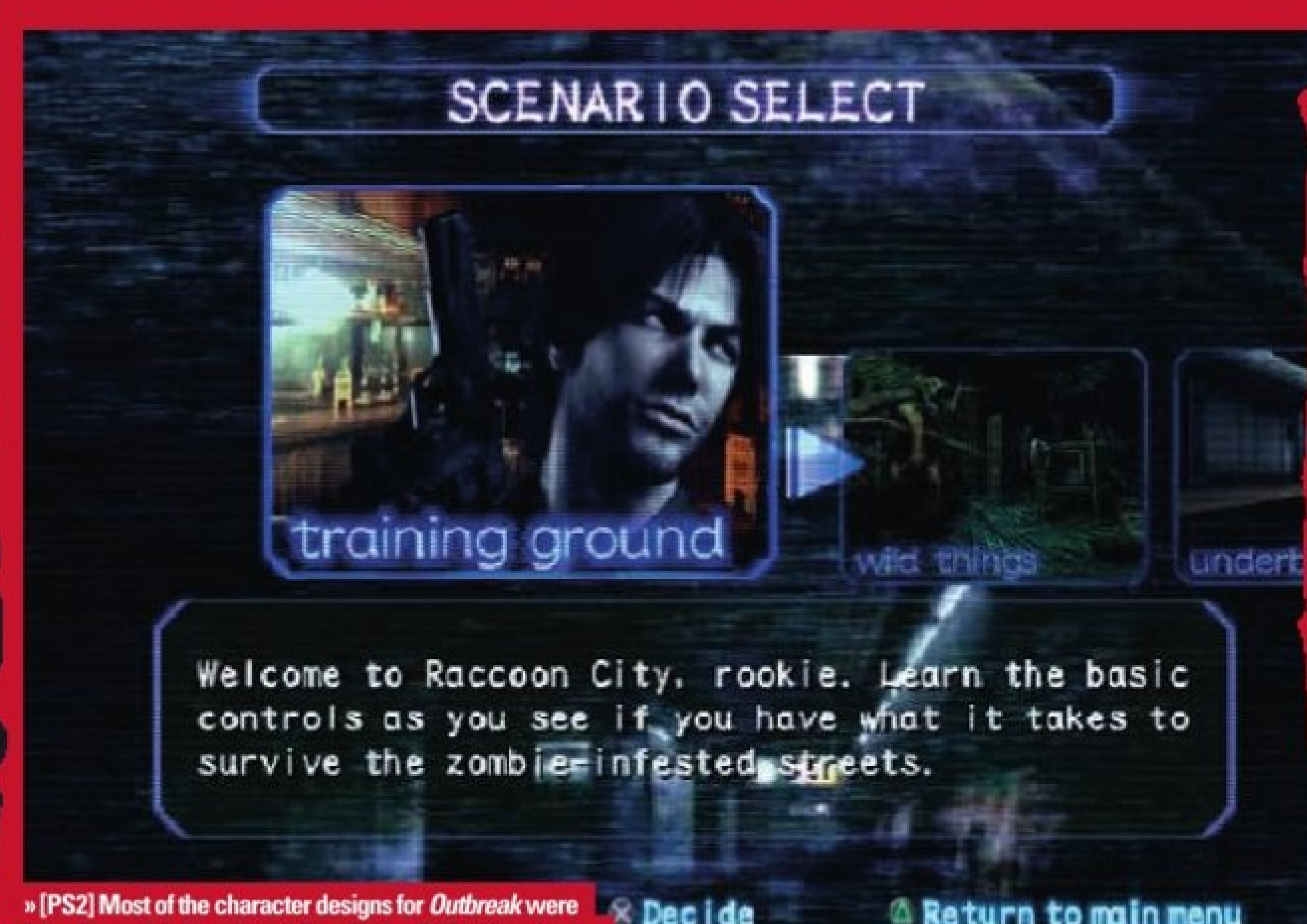
"We were completely amazed when we heard over a hundred musicians play [at the 20th Century Fox Hollywood Studio] in perfect harmony by just reading their score sheets, practically instantly, without rehearsing," the pair state in their foreword to *The Complete Official Guide To Resident Evil 5*. Often overlooked, *Resident Evil*'s music is key to both its thrills and chills. After all, what would the first game be without 'Moonlight Sonata'?

playing blackjack to decide who is going to be stuck with the responsibility of making the next episode in the series."

Design changes, controversy and the changing landscape of game design (both fiscally and geographically) had taken their toll. Takeuchi would state to *Famitsu* that "*Resident Evil* is known for being able to keep up with the times", but for many fans, *5* didn't. AI-controlled Sheva was a nightmare compared to *Gears Of War*'s Dom (the obvious inspiration for the addition) and the inability to move and shoot would prove a sticking point for fans who had played EA's *Dead Space*. It's destined to be remembered as a good effort, stuck between two worlds. Kawata at least has refused to dwell on it. "I am keen to think about the future of the series rather than the ones in the past," he told **Retro Gamer**. "I will constantly do my best to deliver something great for all the *Resident Evil* fans."

**"We're playing blackjack to decide who'll be stuck with the responsibility of making the next episode"**

With excellent sales of *Resident Evil 5*, and *part 6* and team-based shooter *Operation Raccoon City* on the horizon, however, there's no chance of the series dying just yet. Why? Because man's oldest emotion is fear, and we love playing it out in controlled environments, preferably with a big gun and bad dialogue to go with it. The *Resident Evil* series has had its ups and downs, but its importance in the world of videogames is difficult to understate, as is the special place it has in the hearts of those who thought it safe to enter that rundown mansion in the heady days of 1996.




» [PS2] Most of the character designs for *Outbreak* were based on celebrities. Here's Tom Cruise/RPD officer Kevin.



**Special thanks to Paul Freshwater of www.crimson-head.com and Luca Taborelli of www.unseen64.net for their help with this article**

# Sideshow freaks

**Getting to grips with Resident Evil's extended universe**

LIKE ALL FAMOUS franchises, *Resident Evil* has mutated and evolved faster than even its creators could have imagined. As well as novelisations, comic books, action figures, big-budget films and even interactive ghost houses built like the Spencer Mansion, *Resident Evil* has branched out into other videogame genres as Capcom has aimed to exploit its killer franchise, establishing side-stories and tying the universe together into one unwieldy package.

This trend began in earnest with the release of 2000's *Resident Evil: Survivor*, a light gun title that was notable for being the first *Resident Evil* game seen from a first-person perspective. Players took on the role of Ark Thompson, an amnesiac who awakens on an Umbrella-owned island dedicated to spewing out bio-organic weapons. Poor controls and lukewarm gameplay, however, ensured that the game wasn't a critical success.

Undeterred, Capcom gave us *Gun Survivor 2* soon after, which took elements and scenarios from *Code Veronica* and repackaged them into another light gun-themed FPS. Again, the result was not critically successful. Neither was *Resident Evil Gaiden* for the Game Boy Colour, a spin-off that saw Leon and Barry thwart an outbreak on a cruise ship, sadly held back by the primitive technology of the time.

Much finer was 2003's *Resident Evil Dead Aim*, yet another FPS blaster set on a cruise ship. Introducing US and Chinese special agents Bruce McGivern and Fong Ling, it has ties to the main series but is at heart a rudimentary shooter that is light on scares.

2004 saw Capcom's bravest gamble yet, with the release of *Resident Evil Outbreak*, a team-focused co-op experience that saw up to four players working together to escape Raccoon City. Good decisions (having all the character be 'normal' people with special skills that aid their escape is a nice touch) clashed with bad – no voice chat! – to ensure that both *Outbreak* and its sequel are remembered as frustrating missteps, though they are ripe for a current-gen update now online gaming is a more stable experience.

After a series of misses, Capcom returned to the light gun mine it had furrowed so deeply, with two on-rails Wii titles that are both canonically sound and actually fun to play. The first is *Resident Evil: The Umbrella Chronicles*, which is notable for telling the *RE* story from Albert Wesker's perspective and being the first *Resident Evil* game to show Umbrella founder Ozwell Spencer on screen. The sequel, *Darkside Chronicles*, is as close as we're going to get to a full-blown *Resident Evil 2* remake for the time being. Deepening Krauser's relationship with Leon while also enabling players to revisit the RPD, it's well worth checking out for any fan who wants to expand their knowledge of the sequel.

Finally, there's the upcoming *Operation Raccoon City*, a team-based shooter that's being developed by Slant 6, which developed the so-so *Socom Confrontation*. Again set in and around the events of *Resident Evil 2*, we're anxious to see how this pans out. After the disappointment of *The Mercenaries 3D* on 3DS, we're staying hopeful that this will fare much better.

# Rogues' Gallery

**Breaking down Resident Evil's main players**

For a franchise with so many instalments, and hence so many memorable characters, it would be near-impossible to feature them all. So we've narrowed it down to the main players on the *Resident Evil* stage, from Wesker to Claire Redfield. Sadly, Tofu didn't make the cut…

### ALBERT WESKER

Series villain and Chris's nemesis (and tormentor), Wesker pulls all the strings in his plot for world domination. Assassination, subterfuge and even genocide are all in a day's work, and his tendrils snake through the whole series.

**CONNECTIONS:** Ozwell Spencer, Ada Wong, Chris Redfield, Umbrella, STARS, William Birkin, HCF, Tricell, 'The Organisation'

**APPEARANCES:** *Resident Evil, Resident Evil 0, Resident Evil: Code Veronica, Resident Evil 4* (side-story) *Resident Evil 5, Resident Evil: The Umbrella Chronicles, Resident Evil: The Darkside Chronicles*



### CLAIRE REDFIELD

Chris's sister and the star of *Resident Evil 2*, replacing former lead Elza Walker to tie the sequel in with the first game. Returns in *Code Veronica*, again as star. Loves motorcycles, hates Umbrella, and unfortunately has to spend a lot of time with that punk Steve Burnside in *Code Veronica*.

**CONNECTIONS:** Chris Redfield

**APPEARANCES:** *Resident Evil 2, Resident Evil: Code Veronica, The Mercenaries 3DS.*



### CHRIS REDFIELD

Former Air Force pilot and STARS member, Chris is last seen working for the *Resident Evil* Security and Assessment Association (BSAA) in Africa. He's the brother of Claire Redfield and has a mutual dislike for Wesker, who he frequently tries to kill. He finally bests Wesker in *Resident Evil 5*'s finale.

**CONNECTIONS:** STARS, Claire Redfield, Albert Wesker, Jill Valentine, BSAA, Sheva Alomar

**APPEARANCES:** *Resident Evil, Resident Evil: Code Veronica, Resident Evil 5*



### BARRY BURTON

Affable father figure as well as weapons specialist to the STARS Alpha Team, Barry is protective of Jill, saving her life on more than one occasion in the Spencer Mansion. Blackmailed by Wesker into joining his plot in *Resident Evil*, he helps Jill escape Raccoon City in *Resident Evil 3* seconds before the city is destroyed.

**CONNECTIONS:** STARS, Jill Valentine, Umbrella, Chris Redfield, Albert Wesker

**APPEARANCES:** *Resident Evil, Resident Evil 3, Resident Evil Gaiden, Resident Evil 5, The Mercenaries 3D*



### JILL VALENTINE

She's 'the master of unlocking' and Chris's old partner. After escaping Raccoon by chopper in *Resident Evil 3*, she turns up in *Resident Evil 5* as a zombified killing machine who is controlled by Wesker. Eventually, however, she is freed from her mind control and escapes with Chris and Sheva.

**CONNECTIONS:** STARS, Wesker, Umbrella, Barry Burton, Chris Redfield

**APPEARANCES:** *Resident Evil, Resident Evil 3, Resident Evil 5, The Mercenaries 3DS*





### HUNK

Elite special forces operative who is known for always surviving even the most dangerous assignments, earning him the nickname Mr Death. Steals the G-virus sample from Birkin on Wesker's orders in *Resident Evil 2*.

**CONNECTIONS:** Umbrella, Albert Wesker, William Birkin, Umbrella

**APPEARANCES:** *Resident Evil 2, Resident Evil: The Umbrella Chronicles, Resident Evil: The Darkside Chronicles*



### LEON S. KENNEDY

A rookie cop, whose first day at work marks the outbreak of *Resident Evil 2*. Later he finds himself working for the US Government in *Resident Evil 4*, and is dispatched to Spain to rescue Ashley Graham, the kidnapped First Daughter. Has a contentious relationship with spy Ada Wong that developed in *Resident Evil 2*.

**CONNECTIONS:** Claire Redfield, RPD, Ada Wong

**APPEARANCES:** *Resident Evil 2, Resident Evil Gaiden, Resident Evil 4, Resident Evil: The Darkside Chronicles, Operation: Raccoon City*



### OZWELL E. SPENCER

Founder of Umbrella Corporation, billionaire and all around bastard, Spencer's reach affects most of the franchise. It is his mansion that contains the research that spills out into Raccoon City. His ultimate goal is to create a master race of new humans, but he is instead assassinated by Wesker.

**CONNECTIONS:** Umbrella, STARS, Albert Wesker, William Birkin.

**APPEARANCES:** *Resident Evil: The Umbrella Chronicles, Resident Evil 5*



iTUNES SEARCH: 3D ARTIST
iTUNES SEARCH: RETRO GAMER
iTUNESSEARCH:DIGITALARTISTMAGAZINE
iTUNES SEARCH: GAMES TM
iTUNES SEARCH: ICREATE
iTUNES SEARCH: PHOTO FOR BEGINNERS
iTUNES SEARCH: X360
iTUNES SEARCH: 360 MAGAZINE
iTUNESSEARCH:PHOTOSHOPCREATIVE
iTUNES SEARCH: SCIFINOW
Everything you love about mags but now in digital form & yours forever!
Requirements: Apple iPhone 3G, 3Gs, iPod Touch or iPad >> iPhone 3.1.2 or higher >> an Internet connection
Available on the iPhone App Store
POWERED BY PIXELMAGS

# Ramparts

## IN DAYS OF OLD WHEN KNIGHTS WERE CLONES

» RETROREVIVAL




» SPECTRUM
» FUTURE CONCEPTS
» 1988

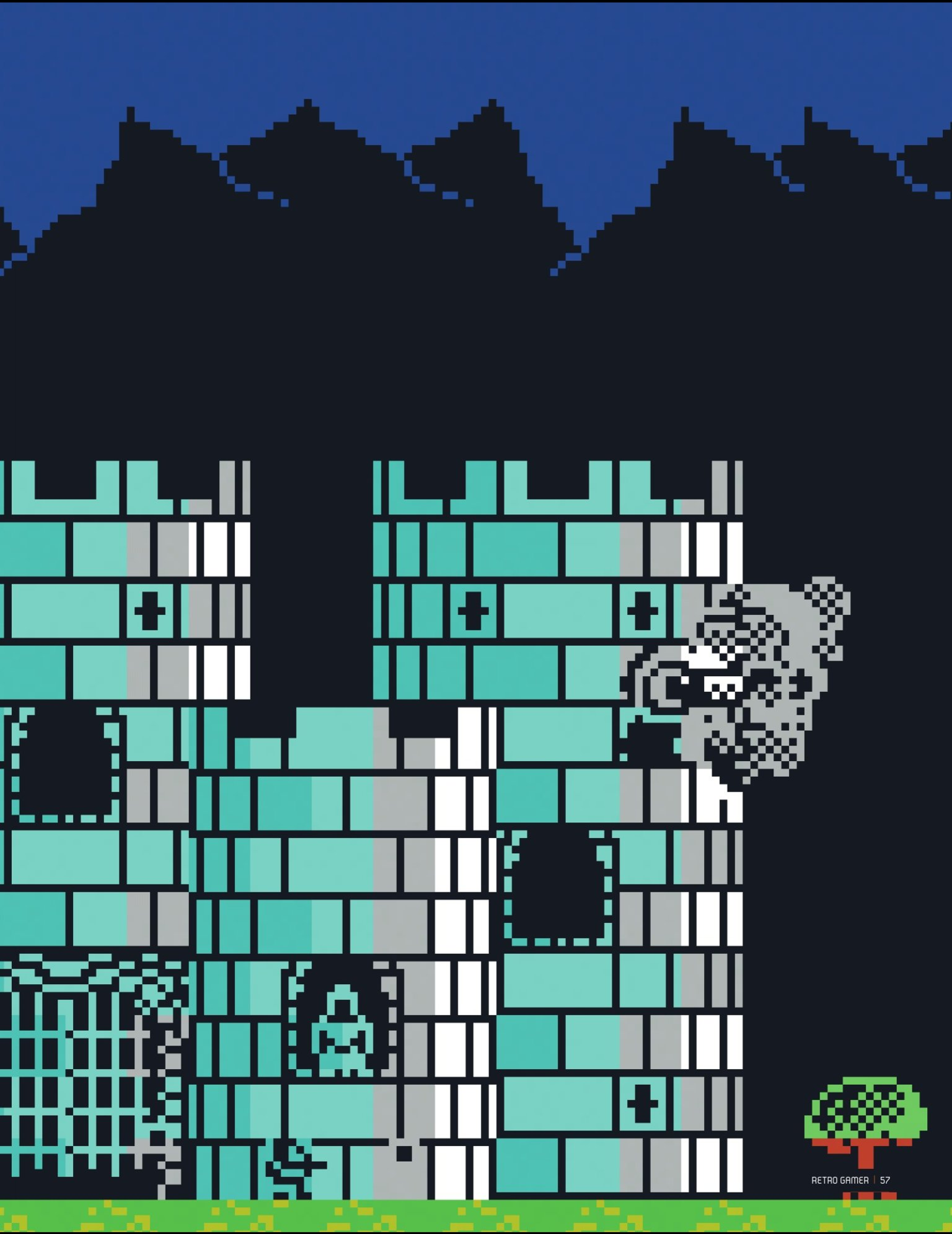
**Imitation is rife in the world of videogames, and it was particularly prevalent during the Eighties, when all developers were keen to emulate the success of the arcades. While we've often focused on the many arcade clones of the BBC micro, there were plenty of similar copycats available on the other 8-bit micros.**

One such example is the amazingly average *Ramparts*, an astonishing – as in, 'How on Earth did the developers never get sued?' – rip-off of Midway's arcade hit *Rampage*. Released a few short months after US Gold's own port of the skyscraper-stomping arcade game, *Ramparts* replaced the cities of *Rampage* with castles of different shapes and sizes, and swapped the huge monsters of the popular arcade game with oversized rampaging knights.

It was a shameless offering from publisher Go! and developer Future Concepts, but was nevertheless a popular alternative to US Gold's game thanks to some funky music, its distinct setting and huge, well-animated sprites. It was unable to pull off the three-player option found in *Rampage*, but it still remained harmless, trashy fun. Well, at least for a little while.

As with *Rampage*, smashing up castles was initially amusing, but it wasn't long before boredom would set in. There was very little variety in each stage – a taller castle here, more turrets there – and as a result *Ramparts* quickly run out of steam. And yet it's easy to see why *Ramparts* notched up fairly decent scores upon its release, because it did offer mindless carnage, albeit it in bite-sized chunks.

Play it alongside the superior *Rampage*, however, and *Ramparts'* flaws become apparent. For starters, it's incredibly clunky to play, with stodgy controls that make it very hard to climb up and down the sides of buildings. You're also unable to climb on top of castles, punch upwards, or punch downwards while pummelling buildings, which means levelling castles takes far longer than demolishing the equivalent buildings in *Rampage*. *Ramparts* isn't a perfect game by any means, but it's worth experiencing, just so you can ponder how Future Concepts and Go! actually got away with it. *






# SINCLAIR ZX

**Resident Spec-chums Richard Burton and Martyn Carroll look at the little** British computer that's now a big draw for collectors




» **Manufacturer:** Sinclair Research » **Models:** 16K/48K/128/+2/+3 » **Launched:** 1982 » **Country of origin:** UK

# SPECTRUM

» Even Spectrum magazines are collectable, and they're a rich source of information about little-known games.







» The Spectrum was reasonably priced on its release and that holds true today.



» No Spectrum software collection would be complete without at least a few of Ultimate's classy titles.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

■ Sinclair republished Ultimate's first four releases – *Jetpac*, *Pssst*, *Tranz Am* and *Cookie* – on ROM cartridge and later released them as part of its silver-labelled tape range too. However, the tape version of *Tranz Am* was seemingly never released, despite being reserved a spine code (G29/S). So why would Sinclair release the other three games but not this one? Well, one theory is that *Tranz Am* was actually released! We've spoken to a reputable collector who swears blind that he saw a copy back in the day. Maybe a copy is out there. Maybe you'll be the lucky one to find it...

## WHY IT'S COLLECTABLE

**In its lifetime the Spectrum was the inexpensive computer that was accessible to everyone. Now, for a collector, it is much the same. Hardware and software is in abundance, and with very little outlay you can pick up a working machine and a ton of software. On eBay right now, for around a fiver, you could buy enough copies of Sinclair-published titles like *Computer Scrabble* and *Make-A-Chip* to construct a habitable dwelling. But it's not just a case of collecting for the sake of it, or because you owned or played a Spectrum in your youth. There are several very good reasons why it's a great platform to start collecting for.**

First off, the original rubber-keyed model really is a thing of beauty. Thanks to its diminutive and distinctive design, it still looks lovely, and you can't honestly say that about many of its boring beige rivals. If you're a collector of 8-bit computers then the original Spectrum just has to be in your possession. It's a design classic.

If you have a Spectrum on your wanted list then the good news is that you'll have no problem picking one up second-hand. The later 48K models, with the blue-coloured keys, are in abundance, and working examples can be picked up at a reasonable price. (Note that a common fault with the original design is a broken keyboard membrane, resulting in one or more keys refusing to work, but this fault is easy to fix – see **www.rwapsoftware.co.uk** for more details.) For the more serious collector there's always the rarer issue 1 version, which includes either 16 or 48K of RAM and is easily identifiable thanks to its lighter, grey-coloured keys. In addition, the lower the serial number, the more valuable the machine as enthusiasts look to acquire one of the first Speccys to have rolled off the production line. There was a memorable case on eBay a while back where a buyer won an issue 1 Spectrum for £97 and then sold the same machine a couple of weeks later for £332. The reason for this healthy profit? The canny buyer noticed that the machine he'd bought had the very low serial number 001-000184 and drew attention to this fact in his listing, thereby increasing interest and driving up the final price.

Also coveted by collectors is the Spectrum 128 computer. It may not be as easy on the eye as the original, thanks to it adopting the comparatively ugly keyboard and casing style introduced with the Sinclair QL, but it has resonance with fans as it was the last true Sinclair Spectrum to be released before Amstrad took over the operation. And speaking of Amstrad, the later +2 and +3 models, with their respective tape and disk drives, are also worth considering if you're looking for a quick and easy way of loading software and would like a Speccy with a proper keyboard.

So there are a variety of models available to suit both your budget and collecting needs. And once you have the hardware, you have access to the platform's vast software library. It's loaded with gems, including some fantastic exclusives like *Back To Skool*, *Deathchase*, *Avalon* and *Chaos*. Then there are the classic titles that began life on the Spectrum before being ported across to other machines, such as *Manic*



» Here's the unusual double-case release of International Matchday. The game typically shipped in a small single-case.







*Miner*, *Ant Attack*, *The Lords Of Midnight*, *Turbo Esprit* and *Head Over Heels*. The machine is also home to some fine coin-op conversions including *Bomb Jack*, *Chase HQ*, *Rainbow Islands*, *Renegade* and *R-Type*. There's a ton of top licensed stuff too, like *The Trap Door*, *Dan Dare*, *Tai-Pan*, *Cobra* and *The Great Escape*.

Beyond acquiring the best games, or the ones you remember from way back when, there are some nice mini-collections to aim for. An excellent one is the range of early games published by Sinclair that sported the iconic colour 'flash' motif. Most also featured striking inlay art. There were 38 cassette titles, plus a further ten on cartridge, making a rather fitting 48 in total. The carts are particularly collectable and command decent prices, as they were the only games released for Sinclair's Interface 2 add-on. Of the ten, the four from Ultimate are the most sought after.

Which brings us nicely to Ultimate and its Spectrum legacy. The renowned software house released games for most 8-bit computers, but the Spectrum was always its primary platform. There were 17 individual Spectrum titles in total, making it a very realistic collection target, although a few of the later titles, like *Martianoids* and *Bubbler*, are not as common so you'll need to fork out for them. It's surely worth it, as a complete Ultimate collection is a wonderful sight, with the impressive big box releases like *Sabre Wulf*, *Knight Lore* and *Alien 8* forming the centrepiece. And to finish off the collection in style there's one final thing you need to add, but more on that in a few pages…

Ultimate sadly never released any games that took advantage of the Spectrum 128's extra capabilities, but a number of developers did and some of the early 128K-only games are attractive to collectors. You'll certainly see more interest around the 128K versions of *Ghostbusters* or *Three Weeks In Paradise* than the standard 48K releases. The same goes for +3 disk versions. Most software houses put games out on disk, but in the vast majority of cases they were exactly the same as the tapes, only with less painful loading times. There were a few exceptions, however. *North & South*, *Shadow Of The Beast*, *Golden Axe* and various Level 9 adventures all featured elements that were exclusive to the disk version. Magnetic Scrolls went one further and ditched tape completely for all of its Spectrum games bar *The Pawn*, so classic adventures like *The Guild Of Thieves* and *Jinxter* are only available on disk.

One of the greatest joys of collecting Spectrum software is that you never really know what you might find. If you were to take a chance on a closed box full of games you'll probably find all of the usual suspects like *Horace Goes Skiing* and *RoboCop*, but lurking at the bottom might be that Ultimate game you've been searching for. Or, just maybe, there might be a super-rare, possibly self-published title that has yet to be archived at the awesome World of Spectrum (**www.worldofspectrum.org**). The website currently holds details on more than 10,000 games, yet that number includes around 1,000 that are thought to exist but have yet to be found in the wild. If even more people start collecting for the Spectrum then maybe, collectively, we can fill in all the gaps. Happy hunting.

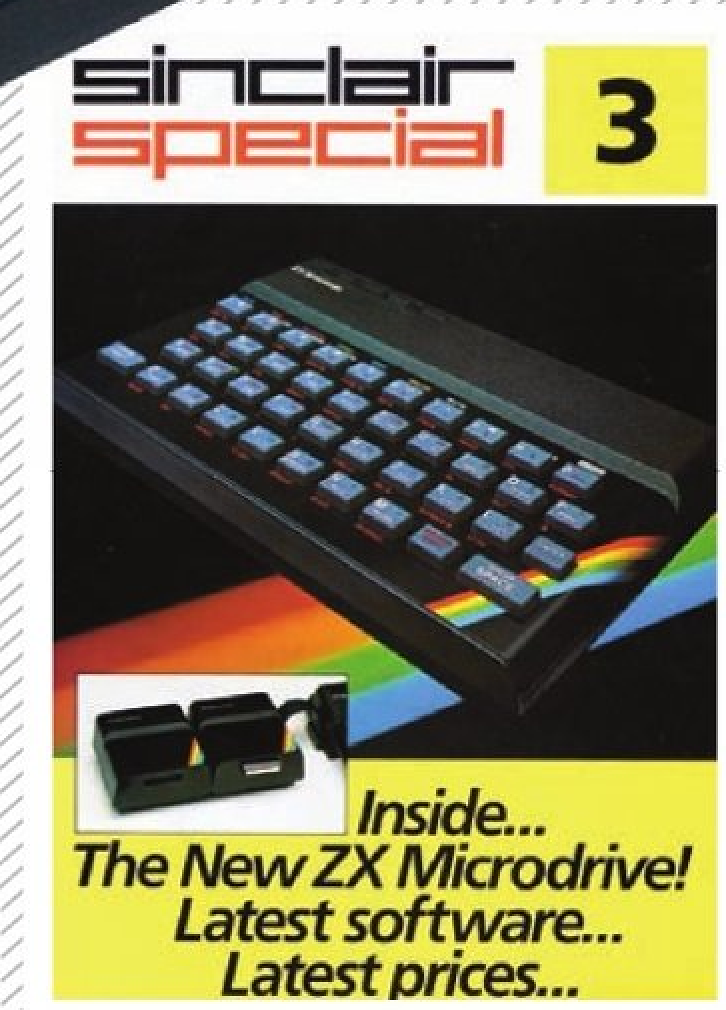
# THE PERIPHERALS




» Microdrives have a deserved reputation for unreliability, but in 1983 they were a cost-effective method of saving data.




» Sinclair advertising supplements like this one provide an interesting look back into gaming's past, plugging all the latest games and peripherals.




## ZX INTERFACE 1 & 2

**To keep costs down, the original Spectrum was rather sparse around the back; there was no standard serial connector, joystick port or cartridge slot. Besides the TV and tape sockets, there was just an exposed edge of the motherboard to which various peripherals could be connected. But this was all part of Sinclair's grand plan, as in 1983 the company released the ZX Interface 1 and 2. These official add-ons were designed to make the Spectrum complete.**

Sitting snugly beneath the computer, the Interface 1 peripheral was a real box of tricks. It provided the user with an RS232 serial connector for plugging in external devices like printers and modems, and a network connector for creating a LAN of up to 64 Speccys, presumably in a bid to get the computer into more classrooms. But the interface's real draw was that it enabled you to connect up to eight of Sinclair's Microdrive storage units.

Using cassette tapes to load and save data was slow, yet speedy random-access disk drives were prohibitively expensive, so the idea of a small and relatively cheap tape-loop cartridge system seemed like a typically astute Sinclair solution. Sadly, the device suffered from months of delays and when it was eventually released, users discovered that the tape in the cartridges could easily stretch or snap, thereby destroying precious data. It was also revealed that if the Spectrum crashed when writing to a cartridge the Microdrive would continue to whirl away and erase all of the data. So the reliability of the system was far from sound, yet the cartridges were cheap, so all the user had to do was make additional backups to one – okay, maybe two – further carts to safeguard against data loss.

Shortly after the release of the Interface 1 and Microdrive, Sinclair unveiled its second add-on. The Interface 2 was a much simpler affair aimed at the Spectrum's swelling number of gamers. It featured twin joystick ports and a slot for plugging in ROM cartridges, effectively turning the computer into a plug-and-play console. Being able to connect two joysticks was a great idea and gave it an edge over competing joystick interfaces offered by the likes of Kempston and Fuller, but the cartridge slot was only able to deal with software up to 16K in size, thereby ruling out the vast majority of games designed for the 48K Spectrum. The ROM carts were expensive too, at two to three times more than the equivalent cassette version. Punters weren't prepared to pay the extra just to cut out a few minutes of loading time.

At the time of their release, neither interface could be described as a must-have, as there were third-party peripherals available that would probably suit your expansion needs better. But now, for the Sinclair enthusiast, these iconic add-ons are compulsory parts of any Spectrum hardware collection. Key to their appeal is that they perfectly complement the design of the original rubber-keyed computer, so when all of the official components are hooked up together, it really looks the business.

## …AND THE REST




### 01. Kempston Joystick Interface

■ Every serious Speccy gamer needed a joystick, and in the early days there were several competing standards. The Kempston interface quickly emerged as the most popular and was supported by many commercial games. Once you had the interface, you just needed to add a Competition Pro or Zip Stick and you were away.

### 02. Multiface 3

■ This amazing device needs little introduction. Romantic Robot released several Multifaces over the Spectrum's lifetime, but it was this version, specifically designed for the +3, that was indispensable. With a touch of the magic red button you could back up your tape games to disk and more besides. Absolute bliss.

### 03. Fuller Box

■ While Spectrum 'beeper' sound has a certain charm, it was one area where the machine was lacking. The Fuller Box addressed this problem by including an AY-3-8912 sound chip – the same one that was later used in the Spectrum 128. It could be programmed by the user and was supported by several games.

### 04. Currah MicroSpeech

■ Make your Spectrum swear! This speech synthesiser was surprisingly popular, even though it was only fun for about five minutes. A decent number of commercial games supported the unit, including *Lunar Jetman* and *Hunchback*. Curiously, if you loaded *Booty* with it plugged in you'd get to play a hidden game.

### 05. Opus Discovery

■ There were a number of disk interfaces – Beta, Disciple, etc – that let you hook up a standard disk drive to a Spectrum. The Opus was an all-in-one solution that provided the user with one or two 3.5-inch drives, plus various ports and connectors. It was a high-quality, if expensive, piece of kit.

### 06. Magnum Light Phaser

■ Several lightguns were released for the Spectrum over the years, but this Sinclair-branded effort had the most impact, as it was bundled with the Spectrum +2 Action Pack. Amstrad also ensured that there was software to support it, including games such as *Operation Wolf* and *The Living Daylights*.

### 07. Saga Keyboard

■ A lot of people love the Speccy's rubber keys, but from a practical viewpoint only a sadist would want to prod them for any length of time. As with the ZX81 before it, third-party manufacturers like Saga and dk'tronics released replacement keyboards that screwed directly into the machine's casing, allowing relatively pain-free extended use.

# The Collector's Guide

## TOP GAMES TO PLAY




### Dynamite Dan

■ Despite being overshadowed by *Manic Miner* and *Jet Set Willy*, *Dynamite Dan* was an aural and visual explosion of colour and sound that was chock full of nice touches. Tremendously playable and highly addictive.




### Nodes Of Yesod

■ Yes, it's a bit like *Underwurlde*, but Odin's homage to Ultimate stands the test of time. With exploring, dodging the red spaceman and hunting for hidden rooms, *Nodes* was arguably more gratifying than *Underwurlde*.

### Starquake

■ Stephen Crowe's arcade adventure was another game presented in the style of Ultimate. Yet it was easy to see why *Starquake* was considered better than many of the games it seemed intent on imitating.




### Dun Darach

■ This complex and testing graphic adventure from Gargoyle Games introduced great character interaction, making for a more immersive and atmospheric game than its predecessor, *Tir Na Nog*.

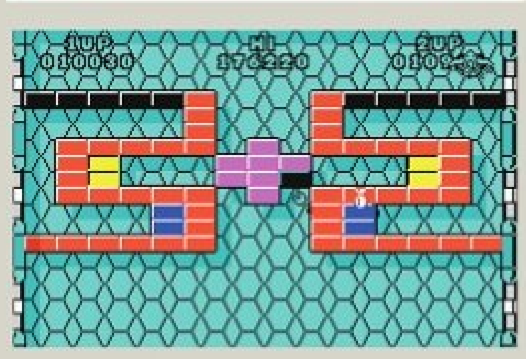



### Cybernoid

■ *Cybernoid* wasn't a particularly original concept, but Raffaele Cecco's attention to detail, wonderful graphics and fast gameplay made for a game that you just couldn't put down.




## PLAY THESE NEXT



### Batty

■ Despite starting out life as a freebie cover tape, *Batty* was the *Breakout* clone that topped them all. *Arkanoid* had been released earlier and the similarities were obvious – ingenious power-ups, aliens, etc – but what propelled *Batty* to the fore was the fantastic simultaneous co-operative two-player mode.



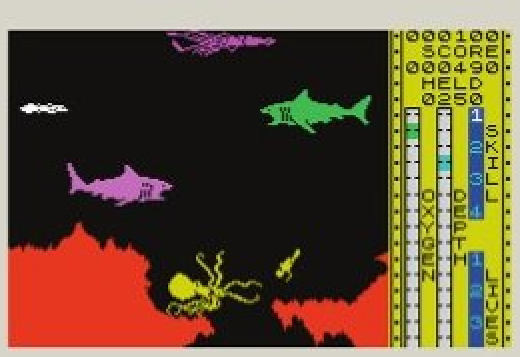

### The Hobbit

■ *The Hobbit* was, for many Spectrum owners, their first experience of adventuring. With a story everyone knew, puzzles that weren't too cryptic to be unsolvable and a decent parser, *The Hobbit* remains a nostalgic favourite, even for those gamers who don't usually dabble with text adventures. Wait. Wait. Time passes…




### Skool Daze

■ Microsphere's game was a triumph for originality and gameplay. As Eric you must steal your school report from the headmaster's safe by obtaining code letters from teachers, and to get these letters you have to knock them senseless with your catapult. Impish school kids across the land loved *Skool Daze*.



### Scuba Dive

■ Durell Software's golden oldie is one that really hits the nostalgia spot. Whether it's the menagerie of sea life, getting lost looking for treasure and running out of air in the bewildering tunnels, or trying to creep past that giant octopus, it was always worth a play. Simple Spectrum gaming but executed brilliantly.




### Manic Miner

■ Pixel-perfect jumping, 20 extraordinarily well-designed screens, inventive sprites, and all wrapped in a quirky sense of humour. It had a perfectly weighted learning curve that just egged you on to have one more go. *Manic Miner* was often copied but rarely surpassed as king of the Spectrum platform game.

# TOP IMPORT GAMES

### El Capitan Trueno

■ A side-scrolling arcade adventure of two parts. Being released by Dinamic it has all the usual hallmarks of that company's output: lovely graphics with great gameplay but also a hugely testing learning curve. Persevere with it.



### Lorna

■ *Lorna* by Topo Soft was based on the creation of Spanish comic book artist Alfonso Azpiri. This was a side-scrolling beat-'em-up intermingled with *Deathchase*-style levels and proved to be immensely playable.




### Cozumel

■ An illustrated text adventure from Aventuras AD, *Cozumel* was the first in the *Ci-U-Than Trilogy*, all of which were quite superb. You play as an archaeologist, and you've been shipwrecked and lost everything.




### Satan

■ A game of two parts; the first sees you play a platform-jumping barbarian and by the second as a wizard with all the accoutrements required to give Satan a thrashing. Great monochrome graphics combine with Dinamic's typically hard gameplay.

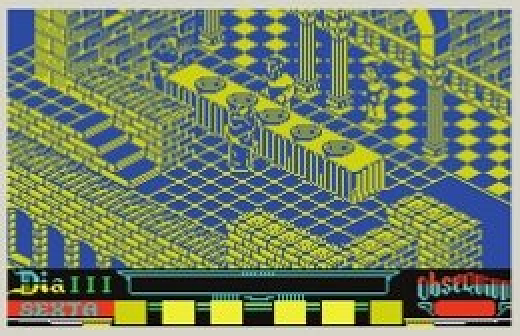


### Soviet

■ This top-down shoot-'em-up from Opera Soft sees you in control of a Soviet tank exploring the cities of Vilnius and Baku, searching for hostages while fending off endless waves of enemies. Sounds dull, plays great.




# IMPORT THESE NEXT



### La Abadia Del Crimen

■ Umberto Eco's novel *The Name Of The Rose* appears on the Spectrum, but having not gained Eco's backing it was renamed *La Abadia Del Crimen* (*The Abbey Of Crime*). This isometric arcade adventure from Opera Soft was a great medieval whodunnit in which you solve the puzzles but must also obey abbey rules.



### Zona 0

■ If the light bikes in *Tron* are your thing then you would love this 3D rendition of the game. A simple concept made better with the addition of the isometric graphical perspective, but it maintains the obligatory 'one more go' compulsion of the original 2D release. Released in Spain by Topo Soft.



### Don Quijote

■ Dinamic's graphic adventure based on Miguel de Cervantes' books from the 17th Century, *Don Quijote* is the story of a man so obsessed with chivalry that he becomes unhinged and sets off on make-believe adventures. Written using Incentive's Graphic Adventure Creator, this adventure is hugely popular in Spain and deservedly so.



### Mortadelo Y Filemon II

■ The Spanish certainly like their comic book adaptations, don't they? *Mortadelo Y Filemon II*, based on Francisco Ibáñez's series, was released by Dro Soft and is a very playable scrolling platform game played over two distinct levels, both of which contain some splendidly colourful and well-defined graphics.



### Paris-Dakar

■ Zigurat's hugely popular racing game sees you in control of a rally car across three levels. You must also maintain your vehicle by purchasing refurbishments. With a low starting budget and big outgoings, you must also race well to gain sponsorship and the money required for your ongoing repairs.

# The Collector's Guide

## RAREST PAL GAMES



### MacMan In The Treasure Caves

■ There were four *MacMan* titles released by Macmillan in total, and any one of them could have featured as they're all insanely difficult to find. Two things made the *MacMan* games the rarities they are: they sold poorly and they're educational games.



### RoboCop 3

■ Ocean's third *RoboCop* game suffered a similar fate to US Gold's third *Indy* game: that of being released in a time when the Spectrum was becoming commercially unviable. It was a reasonably good game but not a patch on the first two *RoboCop* games.



### Ship Of The Line

■ There are many examples of games from the formative days that are rare due to being low-volume bedroom-coded productions; even the bigger companies had to start somewhere. Case in point: Richard Shepherd Software with the entirely homemade release of *Ship Of The Line*, including handmade inlay and home-dubbed TDK tape.



### Dalek Attack

■ Alternative's game is generally regarded as one of the last full-price Spectrum releases and the last licensed game on the system. This side-scrolling platformer sees you play the Doctor in the Sylvester McCoy regeneration, and the game is much like McCoy's Doctor: instantly forgettable. At least you got a Dalek sticker…



### Bored Of The Rings

■ Some games have a very nomadic life. *Bored Of The Rings* has been released by Delta 4, GI Games and Zenobi. CRL then published it for just a couple of months before Silversoft took it on. While common on the Silversoft label, the CRL and Delta 4 variants are very rare.

## GET THESE NEXT



### Ballbreaker II

■ Another CRL rarity, but this one is entirely down to poor sales due to its banality. The sequel to *Ballbreaker*, an isometric *Breakout* clone that hardly set the world alight itself, suffered from brain-numbing slowness and a dodgy isometric perspective. Strictly for the collecting completists only…



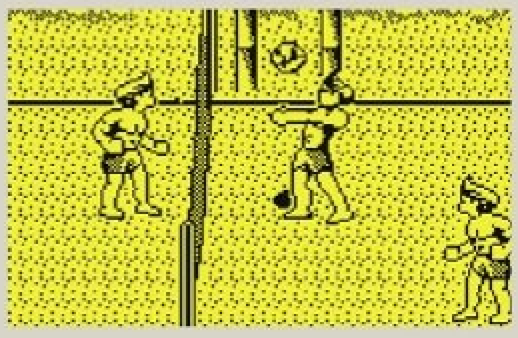
### Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis

■ The third and final instalment of US Gold's *Indiana Jones* trilogy of games arrived in 1992, well into the twilight years of the Spectrum. Despite playing well, it sold in such disappointing numbers that its status as an instant collectable and rarity was virtually assured.



### Specvaders

■ Hewson's *Specvaders* was released early in 1983 amid an avalanche of *Space Invaders* clones. Despite the choice, no one game stood out and dominated the sales. Sadly, *Specvaders* was largely anonymous and not helped by uninspired visuals and poor sales. Finding a copy will cost you a pretty penny. Just ask Steve Brown…



### Beach Volley

■ You would think that a game touting sand, sun and ball games with scantily clad beautiful people sounds like a cracking afternoon's entertainment. Released by Ocean in the depths of winter 1989, it barely registered in the sales department. Once again, commercial failure triumphs in creating a collectable.



### Sly Spy: Secret Agent

■ While the re-release of *Sly Spy: Secret Agent* is as common as muck, the original Ocean release is a real tough one to locate. Quite why that should be is anyone's guess, as it was a great game and actually sold reasonably well; certainly well enough to warrant resurrecting it for the budget release treatment.




# THE JEWEL IN THE CROWN

What? A Spectrum collecting feature without an Ultimate title? Well, why have one when you can have almost the entire back catalogue on disk in one glossy package? Desirable and collectable in equal measure, it's the ultimate compilation…







## The games

■ Encompassing virtually all of Ultimate's Spectrum output bar those licensed to US Gold and *Underwurlde*, which was left out due to compatibility issues, this 11-game compilation was a must-have. From the early days of *Jetpac* through to the isometric magic of *Knight Lore* and beyond, there's not a dud game in the box.



## The map

■ Frequently missing from the box when bought today, the map of Ultimatum was a previously unreleased illustration by the artistic Tim Stamper. Quite what its purpose was other than to brighten up your bedroom wall is unclear, but that unmistakable Ultimate style made it something to covet by default.




## Pushing the envelope

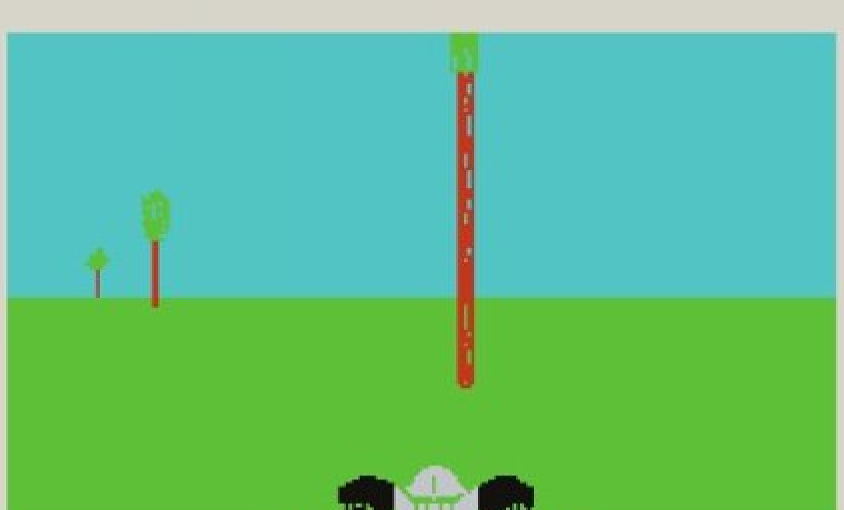
■ The sealed envelope containing the hints sheet is the bane of the collector, as it's a perpetual absentee from *The Collected Works* nowadays. A leaflet containing highlights of a memorable interview with Tim and Chris Stamper conducted by Roger Kean of Newsfield's *Crash* magazine isn't always present either.

Special thanks to 'WoSers' Jarrod Bentley, Andy Startin-Bailey, Craig Stevenson, Tony Barnett, Albert Valls, José Manuel, Bernardo Iborra and Steve Brown for their invaluable help with the feature.

# The Collector's Guide

## THE SINCLAIR ZX SPECTRUM GAMES YOU NEED TO OWN

- 180
- 3D Starstrike
- Abadia Del Crimen, La
- Academy
- Ad Astra
- Airwolf
- Alien 8
- Alien Highway
- Alien Syndrome
- Android 2
- Antics
- Ant Attack
- Arcadia
- Arc Of Yesod
- Arkanoid 2: Revenge Of Doh
- Astro Marine Corps
- Atic Atac
- Back To Skool
- Barbarian
- Bard's Tale, The
- Barry McGuigan's World Championship Boxing
- Batman
- Batman: The Caped Crusader
- Batty
- Bionic Commando
- Bomb Jack
- Booty
- Boulder Dash
- Bounder
- Bounty Bob Strikes Back
- Brian Bloodaxe
- Bruce Lee
- Bubble Bobble
- Bugaboo (The Flea)
- Cabal
- Captain Blood
- Capitan Trueno, El
- Castle Master
- Cauldron
- Cavelon
- Carrier Command
- Chaos
- Chase HQ
- Chuckie Egg
- Cobra
- Codename Mat
- Combat Lynx



Deathchase



Feud

- Combat School
- Commando
- Confuzion
- Cybernoid
- Cybernoid 2: The Revenge
- Cyclone
- Daley Thompson's Decathlon
- Dan Dare
- Dark Side
- Dark Star
- Deathchase
- Deflektor
- Deus Ex Machina
- Dizzy
- Don Quijote
- Doomdark's Revenge
- Draconus
- Dragontorc
- Driller
- Druid
- Dun Darach
- Dustin
- Dynamite Dan
- Dynamite Dan 2
- Elevator Action
- Elite
- Enduro Racer
- Enigma Force
- Exolon
- Fall Guy, The
- Fairlight
- Fantastic Voyage
- Fantasy World Dizzy
- Fat Worm Blows A Sparky
- Feud
- Firefly
- Flying Shark
- Football Director
- Football Manager
- Footballer Of The Year
- Frankie Goes To Hollywood
- Full Throttle
- Gauntlet
- Ghost'N Goblins
- Glider Rider
- Great Escape, The
- Green Beret
- Gunfright

- Gryzor
- Gyron
- Gyroscope
- Hall Of The Things
- Harvey Headbanger
- Head Over Heels
- Heartland
- Heavy On The Magick
- Helter Skelter
- Herbert's Dummy Run
- Highway Encounter
- Hobbit, The
- Horace Goes Skiing
- Hydrofool
- Hysteria
- Hypersports
- Ice Breaker
- Ikari Warriors
- Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis



Match Day II

- Into The Eagle's Nest
- Jack The Nipper
- Jetpac
- Jet Set Willy
- Jinxter
- Joe Blade II
- Knight Lore
- Knight Tyme
- Kokotoni Wilf
- Kwik Snax
- Laser Squad
- Leaderboard
- Lemmings
- Lords Of Midnight, The
- Manic Miner
- Marsport
- Match Day II
- Maziacs
- Mercenary
- Midnight Resistance
- Mikie
- Monty On The Run
- Movie
- Mugsy
- Myth: History In The Making
- Nebulus
- New Zealand Story, The
- Night Shift
- North & South

**EXTREMELY RARE** Games that have less than a few dozen known copies available.

**VERY RARE** Very hard to come by. Expect to see only a couple of copies per year.

**RARE** You should be able to source these in a reasonable amount of time.

**UNCOMMON** You won't find them straight away, but you will after a search.

**COMMON** Always just a click away for the average collector.

**VERY COMMON** So common you'll find them in most bundles of games you buy.

- Nosferatu The Vampyre
- Olli & Lissa
- Operation Thunderbolt
- Operation Wolf
- Paperboy
- Paris-Dakar
- Penetrator
- Pentagram
- Percy The Potty Pigeon
- Ping Pong
- Power Drift
- Price Of Magik, The
- Pyjamarama
- Pyracurse
- Quazatron
- R-Type
- Rainbow Islands
- Raid Over Moscow
- Ranarama
- Rebel Star
- Rebel Star II
- Red Moon
- Renegade
- Rick Dangerous
- Robin Of The Wood
- RoboCop
- RoboCop 2
- Rock Star Ate My Hamster
- Rocky Horror Show, The
- Rod-Land
- Roller Coaster
- Saboteur!
- Sabre Wulf
- Sacred Armour Of Antiriad, The
- Satan
- Scuba Dive
- Sentinel, The
- Shadow Of The Beast
- Sim City
- Sir Lancelot
- Sir Fred
- Skool Daze
- Slap Fight
- Southern Belle
- Space Gun
- Spellbound
- Spindizzy




Renegade

- Splat!
- Split Personalities
- Spy Hunter
- Spy vs Spy
- Starglider
- Starglider 2
- Starion
- Starquake
- Starstrike II
- Steve Davis Snooker
- Stormbringer
- Stormlord
- Strangeloop
- Stunt Car Racer
- Super Pipeline 2
- Sweevo's Whirled
- Switchblade
- Swords And Sorcery
- Tai-Pan
- Tapper
- Target: Renegade
- Tau Ceti
- Technician Ted: The Megamix
- Thanatos
- Theatre Europe
- Three Weeks In Paradise
- Thrust
- Thundercats
- Tir Na Nog
- TLL
- Total Eclipse
- Trailblazer
- Trantor
- Trap Door, The
- Trashman
- Treasure Island Dizzy
- Turbo Esprit
- Turmoil
- Turrican
- Turrican II
- Underwurlde
- Untouchables, The
- Urban Upstart
- Virus
- Way Of The Exploding Fist, The
- Way Of The Tiger, The
- WEC Le Mans
- West Bank
- Wheelie
- Where Time Stood Still
- Who Dares Wins II
- Wizard's Lair
- Wizball
- Wriggler
- Xeno
- Yie Ar Kung-Fu
- Zombi
- Zona 0
- Zub
- Zynaps

## Collector Q&A

As well as his impressive Spectrum collection, Steve Brown is the founder of the TZX Vault project

**What drew you to the Spectrum over other micros?**
*Manic Miner*! I remember going to Blackpool around the end of 1983 and while wandering around a newsagent I saw a copy of *Personal Computer Games* with the mutant telephones screen on the cover. After reading the review, I had to have the game.

Just before Christmas my dad told me I was going to get a computer and wanted to know which one I wanted. Without any hesitation I picked the Spectrum and bought a copy of *Manic Miner* ready to play on Christmas morning. Luckily my dad bought me the 48K model!

**When did you start collecting games seriously?**
The serious collecting happened by accident. I already owned about 50 or so games back in 2000 when I started the TZX Vault preservation project. Around the beginning of 2001 I started buying games just to plug the gaps in my collection, so that's when it really started.

**How many games are in your Spectrum collection?**
I've never actually kept track of how many games I have but if I had to guess I'd say 5,000 plus. I've also got over 600 homebrew adventure games.

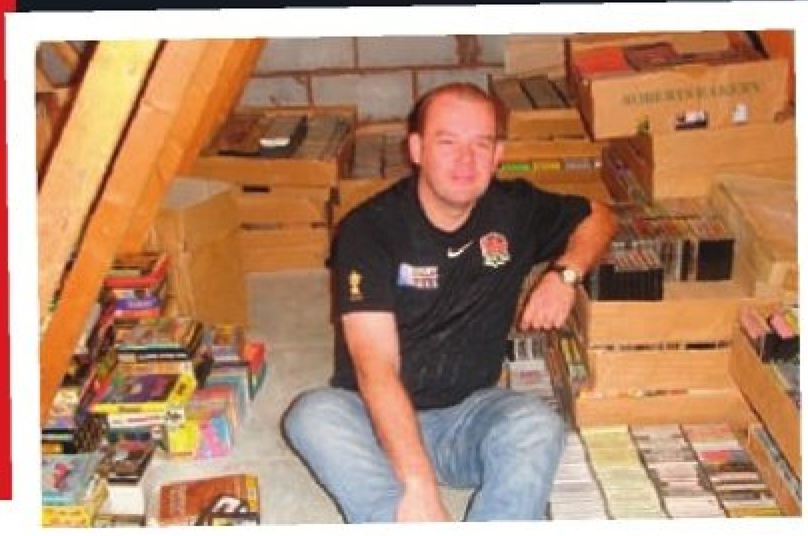
**What is the most you have spent on a single Spectrum game?**
I once spent £160 on eBay for *Specvaders* by Hewson Consultants, as it was the last of the original-style Hewson titles I needed.

**Have you any collecting preferences or quirks?**
I collect games by Mikro-Gen across all formats. Before starting the TZX Vault, I bought some Mikro-Gen games from a local car boot sale, and it made sense to continue collecting Mikro-Gen games as I already had a head start!

**Is there one particular game that is eluding you?**
I'm after *Gnasher* by Mikro-Gen for the Spectrum. I have the ZX81 version called *Paint Maze* and the VIC-20 version called *Puckman*, but the Spectrum version is proving to be very elusive. The only mention of it I've ever seen was in one of the early issues of *Crash*, when it was reviewed.

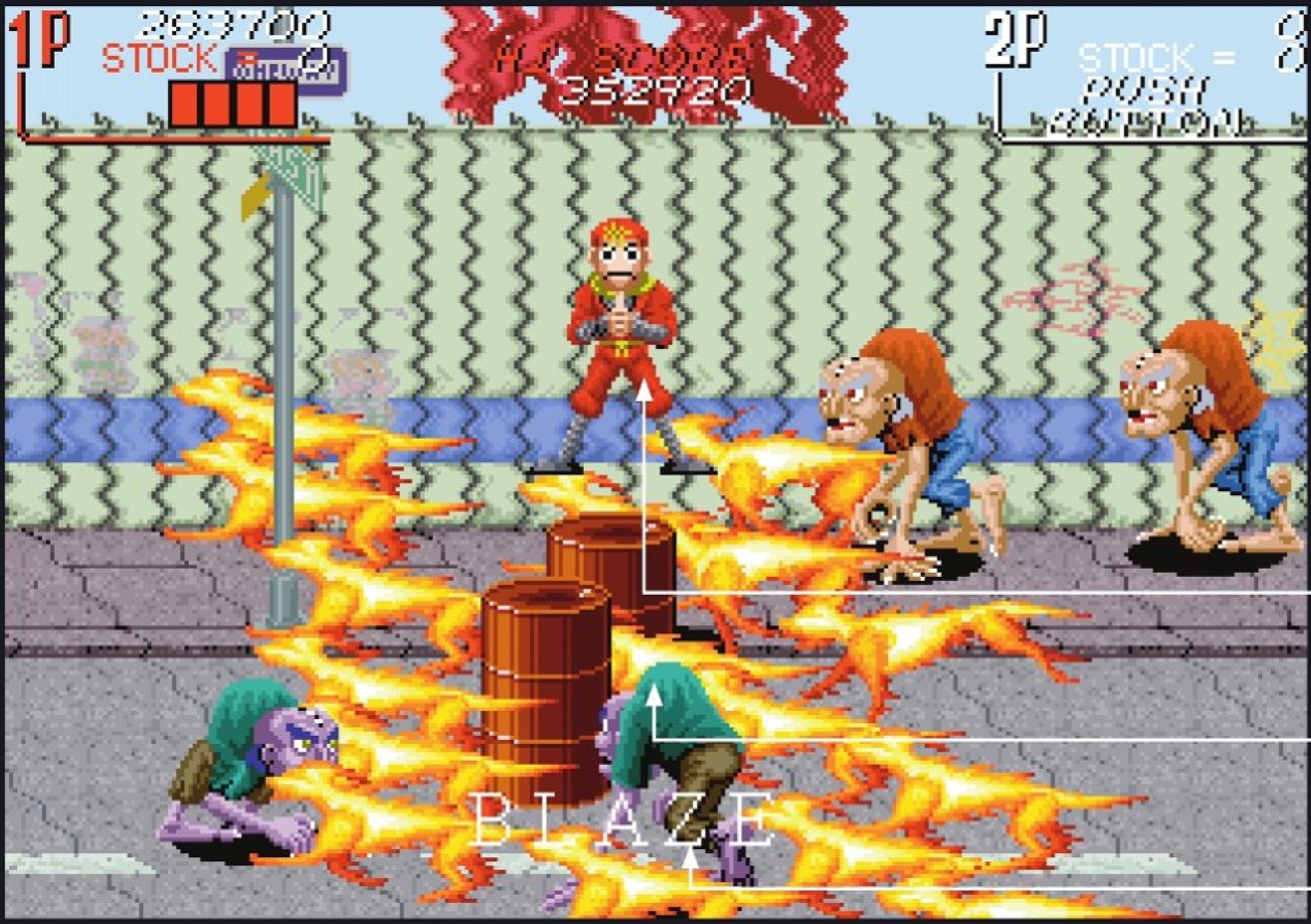
**When did you start the TZX Vault project and why?**
I began the TZX Vault project in February 2000. I knew of a few existing Spectrum preservation sites, however there was no central repository to store all the preserved material and there didn't appear to be any collaboration between sites, so I thought I'd try and organise the preservation effort. Luckily I managed to get Andy Barker, Paul Hurd, Tony Barnett and Martijn van der Heide on board very quickly, and the project took off from there.

**Any advice to new Spectrum collectors?**
I'd say either stick with the popular titles or be selective. There are [over 10,000 games] in the World of Spectrum database. It's just not possible to own every single title ever released. I'd recommend going for the top 100 games as voted for by visitors to the WOS website.



# THE UNCONVERTED

*Arcade games that never made it home*






## IN DEPTH

» *The Ninja Kids* does nothing atypical of Nineties scrolling beat-'em-ups, unless, of course, you count ninja puppets fighting devil worshippers.

» The enemies you face are a pretty random bunch. On a first play you honestly couldn't guess what you'll be facing next. Two seconds ago it was Rastafarians.

» Upon collection of a spell scroll, each character can then perform a special ninjutsu attack. They're all based on the four classical elements.

# THE NINJA KIDS

■ **Developer:** Taito ■ **Year:** 1991 ■ **Genre:** Beat-'em-up

■ **This unusual but surprisingly well-crafted title from Taito has become famous for its ludicrous story above all else, which finds a quartet of ninja marionettes trying to stop a cult of devil worshippers from resurrecting Satan.**

Clearly trying to capitalise on the mania generated by a certain band of pizza-eating reptiles, but then adding an unusual dollop of Satanism and puppetry for reasons unclear, *The Ninja Kids* was typical of ten-a-penny scrolling beat-'em-ups of the Nineties.

The four ninja puppets each have their own unique weapon, as well as a series of ninjutsu spells, which are unimaginatively linked to earth, wind, fire and water. The fight mechanics are equally clear and straightforward. You only have two action buttons to worry about: one actuates an attack and the other a jump. Hitting jump and then quickly following it up with an attack causes your ninja to perform an aerial attack, while pressing both simultaneously, if you've picked up a spell scroll, initiates your character's signature attack, the animation of which seems to change at random points in the game. Finally, double-tapping in any direction causes your character to perform either a handy vertical evasive dash or a horizontal slash attack. And that's pretty much the fundamentals of play covered right there.

As we touched on earlier, the premise is less sane. Some of the bizarre enemies you face include Rastafarian hippies, sheet-wearing devil worshippers with bunny ears, a fast food manager who turns into a werewolf, rotund businessmen, a firebomb-lobbing Iraqi warlord, a posse of hunchbacks, a man driving a Power Loader from *Aliens* and, of course, Satan himself.

Though at points feeling like a parody of the genre, *The Ninja Kids* is actually quite playable. Its uncomplicated nature, whimsical enemies and satisfying combat combine to make an entertaining brawler that is greater than the sum of its parts.

We suspect due to its strange themes, *The Ninja Kids* was never ported at the time of its release. It did eventually get a late home appearance, though, when it was included on *Taito Legends Volume 1*.




### CONVERTED ALTERNATIVE

**TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES** 1989

With its four heroes, ninja weapons and outlandish enemies, it's plain that Taito was motivated by capitalising on *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* hysteria. Konami's smash hit arcade game was released on a surprisingly modest number of consoles and computers.

# SPINAL BREAKERS

■ **Developer:** V-System ■ **Year:** 1990 ■ **Genre:** Run-and-gun



» [Arcade] Using a machine gun on men wielding only swords is acceptable when they're possessed by demons.

■ ***Spinal Breakers* is** the videogame equivalent of the trashy action movies that filled video library shelves in the late Eighties. A third-person on-rails shooter very similar to *NAM-1975*, it sees you slowly strafing your way from left to right, dodging attacks while blowing away anything that moves. In fact, even stuff that doesn't, as drilling bullets into innocent corpses littering the levels rewards you with new weapons and waffles. Yep, you read that correctly: waffles. You see, *Spinal Breakers* has this peculiar fascination with the batter-based cake. Even the main character is called Captain Waffle. This preoccupation aside, keeping us from sticking *Spinal Breakers* in the 'best left' drawer is its hilarious story and imaginative creature designs. You appear to play a space marine who leaves his family to return to Earth and rescue the planet from a bizarre demon race called the Helldroids. The story doesn't mention it having any kind of time-travel component, but the enemies you face are a disparate mix of demonic soldiers, ninjas, samurai and mummies. There's even a stage set in prehistoric times, with demon-possessed cavemen and dinosaurs. It's all a bit bonkers. *Spinal Breakers* is a pretty average blaster but does hold a degree of entertainment value.

## CONVERTED ALTERNATIVE

**NAM-1975** 1990

Released the same year, *NAM-1975* and *Spinal Breakers* could almost have been separated at birth. Well… almost. One of the earliest MVS releases by SNK, *NAM-1975* was released on the AES and Neo Geo CD standards and is reasonably cheap to pick up today.




## CONVERTED ALTERNATIVE

**VICTORY ROAD** 1986

*Out Zone* may not feature rotary controls – that would have made its challenge far easier to stomach – but this odd sequel to *Ikari Warriors*, which saw Paul and Vince launched into the distant future to fight alien foes, certainly has parallels with it.



# OUT ZONE

■ **Developer:** Toaplan ■ **Year:** 1990 ■ **Genre:** Run-and-gun



» [Arcade] Nobody ever told the soldier not to bring a gun to a 50-foot tank fight.

■ **From cult shooter** stalwart Toaplan, *Out Zone* is a frenetic vertical on-foot shooter in the vein of *Commando* and *Ikari Warriors* that sees you play the role of a cyborg marine whose job it is to wipe out a malevolent alien race. The last stand will take place at the titular Out Zone, an outpost divided up into seven lengthy stages, teeming with powerful enemies and bookended by some impressive bosses.

*Out Zone* is one tough cookie, and what makes it so challenging is the fact that you can only take one hit, and you also have a depleting energy bar that has to be continually fed with pick-ups. Making matters worse, players are mostly limited to just two weapon types – a three-way spread shot that can only be fired up the screen and a shot that fires in the direction you're moving – and to get anywhere fast the best tactic is to repeatedly change between them. Levels feature annoying craters to fall into, enemies are many and mighty, and bosses can be gruelling. Yet despite this, *Out Zone* has that 'one more go' quality.

## BEST LEFT IN THE ARCADE

# LADY MASTER OF KUNG FU

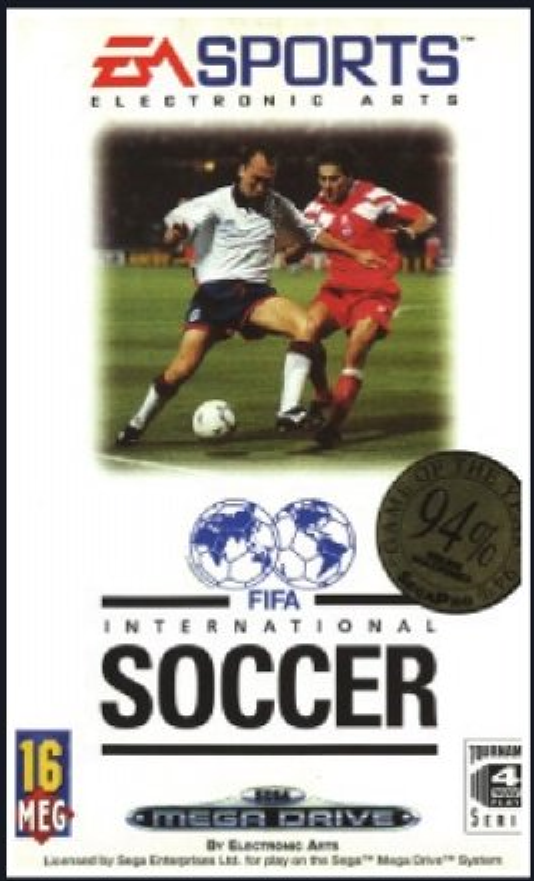
■ **Developer:** Taito ■ **Year:** 1985 ■ **Genre:** Beat-'em-up

■ **This smacks of** an ill-conceived attempt by Taito at trying to make its own version of the Irem classic *Kung-Fu Master* – only designed to appeal to female gamers and pervy old men. The plot isn't entirely clear, but when we played it we imagined that we were playing an aggressive masseuse who has to fight her way around the various floors of a love hotel. She must enter open rooms and beat up the kinky clients waiting for her arrival inside and, when done, they will either leave her a nice can of energy drink or a scroll with a letter on it for her services. Once each letter on a floor is collected, you can then enter through a large door on the top floor, where you get to fight a final boss-type character. All the bosses follow the same ridiculous attack pattern so are pretty easy to thwart, and the controls and combat are fiddly. Ultimately it's a fairly tedious game, even when applying our frankly ridiculous masseuse scenario to it.



# FIFA INTERNATIONAL SOCCER

## While all the cool kids are playing FIFA 12, with his Mega Drive nestled under his arm Stuart Hunt calls for Matt Webster, the man who helped kick off the franchise 18 years ago



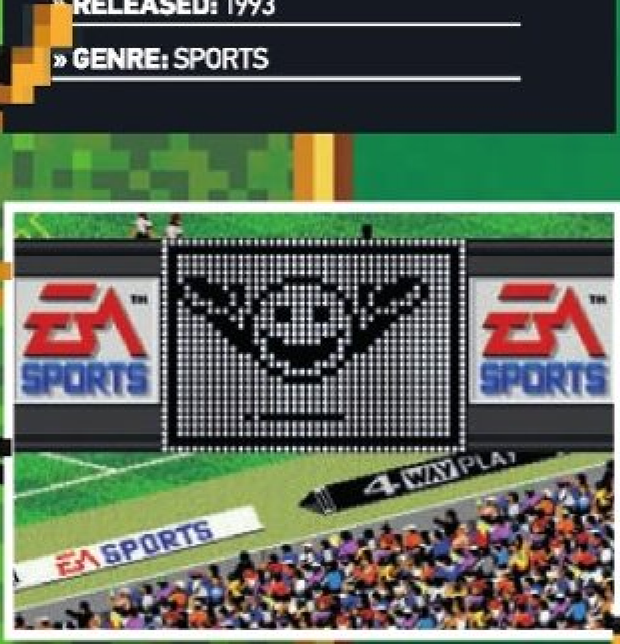

IN THE KNOW

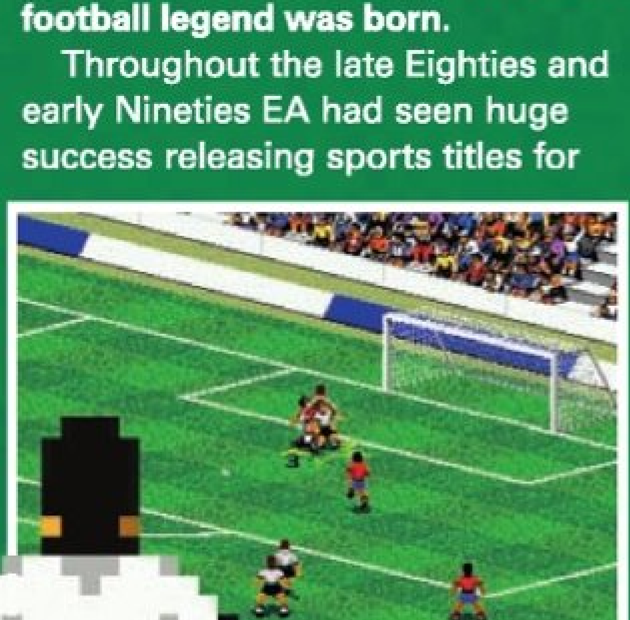
- » **PUBLISHER:** ELECTRONIC ARTS
- » **DEVELOPER:** EXTENDED PLAY PRODUCTIONS/EA CANADA
- » **RELEASED:** 1993
- » **GENRE:** SPORTS

**For many, the run up to *FIFA*'s annual release is seen as the biggest event in the videogame calendar; one that generates a global pre-season warm-up comprising excitement, fanaticism, competition against its long-standing rival in the *Pro Evolution Soccer* series and, hopefully, cause for celebration. A unique sports series, then, as it succeeds in capturing not just the action and emotions that occur on the pitch but also off it. Now seen as one of the biggest and most successful franchises in videogames, this month we look back at how this football legend was born.**

Throughout the late Eighties and early Nineties EA had seen huge success releasing sports titles for the Genesis in the US, most notably with the popular *John Madden Football* and *NHL Hockey* franchises. Often regarded as a key title for Sega, the *Madden* games put an early chink in Nintendo's seemingly impenetrable armour and ultimately helped Sega to win majority share of the North American games market. Unsurprisingly, then, it was the success of these two sports series, combined with the fast growth of the console in the US and Europe, that would inform EA's decision to put a Mega Drive football game into production.

At the time, EA Sports was known as EASN (Electronic Arts Sports Network) and was being led by EA in San Mateo. It was here that a prototype football game was created utilising the *John Madden* engine, but its progress didn't get very far. Football wasn't as popular stateside as it was elsewhere in the world, and the project wasn't getting the attention it needed. With development moving slowly, EA enlisted the help of Brit Matt Webster to help get things back on track.



Matt, who is credited as associate producer on the game, was working at the company's newly established UK studio and began this most important of assignments by putting together a fresh new design idea for the game. And fresh it most certainly was. While most football videogames at the time adopted either side-on or top-down viewpoints, as utilised by *Kick Off* and *Sensible Soccer*, Matt settled on a rather unusual isometric perspective to represent the game. Considering that neither *John Madden Football* nor the *NHL Hockey* series had ever used such a unique viewpoint, top on our list of burning questions to ask Matt was to find out why this perspective was chosen, and whether any others were ever tested.

"In truth, the isometric viewpoint was selected partly because it was so different," Matt told us. "But mostly because I thought that we'd be able to get a better game out of it. I had pulled together the original design and vision for the game, and we were working with a couple of guys







up in Widnes. They had a cobbled together Mega Drive development set built off a Commodore Amiga. We'd asked them to look at the pseudo-3D like *Madden*, the side-scroller that was most popular at the time, and an isometric view. When we looked at the prototypes running, the isometric was just the clear winner. When you looked at them together it was a no-brainer."

Once the isometric viewpoint was settled on, work began on putting together a prototype, and it was shortly after this that EA would decide to move production to EA Canada (EAC) in Vancouver.

Located in Burnaby, British Columbia, and currently employing around 2,000 staff, EA Canada is EA's oldest and largest studio, and the place where every main *FIFA* game has been developed. The massive campus, which houses three production studios, is equipped with the latest motion and facial capture technology to ensure that player animations look as believable as possible and nary a single hair on Rooney's newly fertilised head looks out of place.




» [Mega Drive] *FIFA* featured a welcome dollop of customisation. You could adjust your team's formation, their tactics and even the amount of space they covered on the pitch.

**"In truth, the isometric viewpoint was selected partly because it was so different"**

"EAC was fairly new to EA, created when EA acquired [Distinctive Software] in Vancouver," remembers Matt. "There was an experienced console team there ready to go, and we figured that we could get development running quicker if we moved it there. So we took the difficult decision to cease the development with the guys in Widnes and moved it to Vancouver. These decisions aren't easy, but both of these guys ended up accepting internal positions with the newly expanding UK Studio. The remote development was challenging, but nightly calls and weekly deliverables meant that we could stay on top of the development. The fact is that the team at EAC were very strong, experienced already with EA's amazing development tools that existed on the Sega console, so progress was fast."

Despite the obvious stresses that come with long-distance working relationships, with a fresh and innovative new plan of attack and a passionate captain leading the

## ...AND OFF THE PITCH

LIKE EA'S ESTABLISHED early Mega Drive sports franchises, the presentation throughout *FIFA International Soccer* was exemplary. It allowed players to tweak the rules of play, let you and three friends play together using EA's 'four-way play' adaptor, and featured an innovative action-replay mode that allowed you to stop the action and replay the last few moments of gameplay, among other things. The thought and extra effort made by the EA team to ensure that *FIFA* gave footy fans the complete sports package was undoubtedly a big factor in its success.

Curious as to whether there was anything the team had to drop from the original game, we put the question to Matt. "We ended up cutting out large amounts of variety in the crowd chants," he replied. "The things I remember feeling sorry about was the player-controlled celebration stuff. I really wanted to be able to ram it home when I scored against a friend, but it was great when that went in the following year!"



experienced team of developers, development of EA's isometric football game began to take shape as the EAC team "immersed themselves in the sport" and set about creating an authentic football experience for gamers.

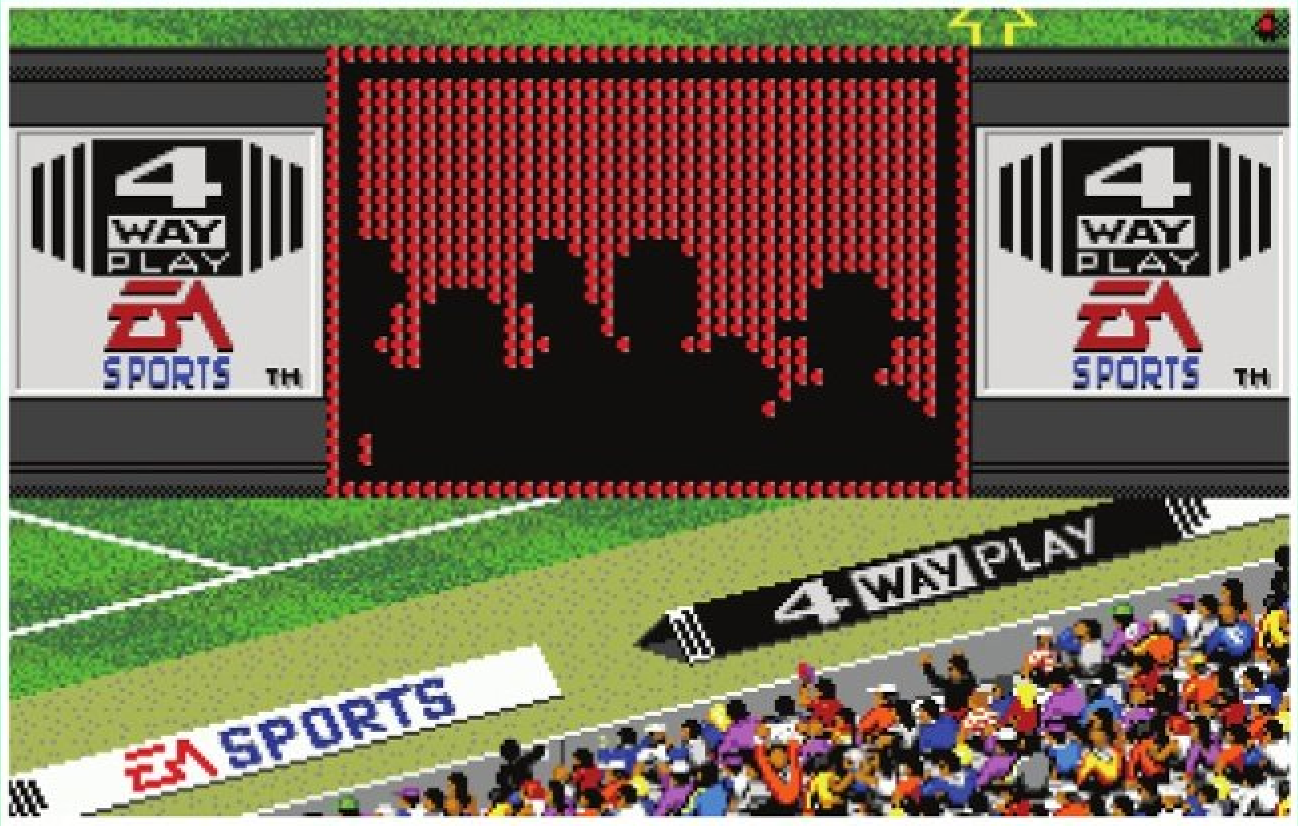
"We started with how the players looked as you controlled them," said Matt. "The isometric view meant that we could get a ton more detail than ever before. I was also able to tune the formation and AI editor, which was linked to where the ball was on the pitch. If the team responded in the right way to where the ball was, then everything flowed together to give a more realistic feel than had gone before. Audio then really came to the fore as we put the crowd chants into a footy game for the first time. The atmosphere really came through."

As well as trying to capture the look and atmosphere of football, the team at EAC also gave careful consideration to how the game would be played. Football games of the time typically assigned one button for passing, lobbing and shooting, but there was often a sense that this was more out of necessity than choice, be it technical limitations on the number of player animations or controller design restricting the number of buttons afforded to players. For *FIFA* the team utilised the power of Sega's 16-bit console and its three-button control pad to incorporate an array of moves into the game. This was something that was especially important to Matt.

"As I said, I wanted to be able to do more than just kick the ball. To create moves you need to build up to a shot. I wanted that depth. Being able to see the team responding to the ball and player position, and seeing the action differently to that which had gone before, really showed that we had something more than our competitors. Gave us an edge."

What struck critics and fans most about *FIFA International Soccer* was the high level of presentation in the game, and this has remained a hallmark of the series. Though the player sprites were identical, they were extremely well animated, able to perform impressive flying headers, back heels, bicycle kicks and theatrical dives. And while the quasi-3D perspective can make it difficult to judge the position of the ball at times, the viewpoint did offer a good playing field for those players who liked to pass the ball and think about their approach. Indeed, rather than use whichever player had possession to dash towards the opposition's goal and shoot, *FIFA*'s design and gameplay encouraged players to take a more considered route towards goal. This was something Matt really wanted to instil into the gameplay.

"I felt that you could see more and get a deeper sense of building up a move with the isometric view," he explains. "The competition at the time was very much about twitch control of the way the player interacted with the ball. For me, at the time, I wanted to see across the pitch and have a sense of crossing



» [Mega Drive] Though born and still living in Canada, *FIFA* was conceived in Britain. Doesn't it make you proud?



**"We put the crowd chants in for the first time and the atmosphere really came through"**

## EVOLUTION OF FIFA

LOOKING BACK AT the past 18 years of videogaming's most successful football franchise...


1. FIFA International Soccer


2. FIFA Soccer 95


3. FIFA Soccer 96


4. FIFA 97


10. FIFA Football 2003


11. FIFA Football 2004


12. FIFA Football 2005


13. FIFA 06


14. FIFA 07




» [Mega Drive] US sports pundit Ron Barr was *FIFA*'s original face. He was a man of very few words and liked to repeat himself. Probably why he was dropped in *FIFA 95*.

the ball laterally ahead of a player to run on to."

For most of its development the game was known as *EA Soccer* within the walls of EAC. The FIFA licence actually came as a late but vital goal, and is now a badge of honour that the series has proudly worn for 18 years. For many, that close affiliation with football's governing body is what makes *FIFA* the only football game to play.

While the late FIFA affiliation meant that the series didn't really make best use of the licence until the release of *FIFA Soccer 95*, which introduced club teams, authentic kit colours and player names to the mix, securing FIFA's blessing was certainly an important moment for the franchise. It gave EA exclusive use of licensed clubs, kits and player likenesses, and, of course, most importantly the the leagues – most importantly the English Premiership, which was established around the time that the original *FIFA* was in production. So just how difficult was it to convince FIFA to let EA use the licence for its game at the time?

"It wasn't hard at all," admits Matt. "I did a bit of research and found a name at FIFA of somebody connected with external relations, made the call and then passed it on to our marketing department to close out. At the time, FIFA wasn't a commercial heavyweight as it's become now. It was a natural addition to the EA Sports line-up so, in a way, having NHL and the NFL relationships helped us."

To date there have been 19 releases in the main *FIFA* series and around 30 spin-off games, with some of the latter falling inside the successful *FIFA Street* and *FIFA Manager* franchises. Selling more than 100 million copies worldwide, *FIFA* is now one of the bestselling videogame franchises ever, and in all that time has remained in the care of EA Canada.

Now a senior producer at Criterion Games, a subsidiary of EA, Matt no longer has anything to do with the *FIFA* series, but there's no doubt it's a series that he is incredibly proud to have played such a key role in creating.

Noticing that we're entering the last few moments of injury time, we therefore finish up by asking Matt for his thoughts on the last 18 years of the franchise and why he thinks it remains so popular today. "It's retained its easy-to-pick-up roots, something that a number of years ago it was derided for, but it's important that anyone can feel like they can get a game and score a goal. It's authentic, looks amazing and plays beautifully. You can't help but be entertained when you play a game. When you watch someone play, it looks like you're watching a real match. The commentary system is a total revelation. I'm in awe of what the team at EAC has achieved over the last 18 years or so with the game. It's remarkable."

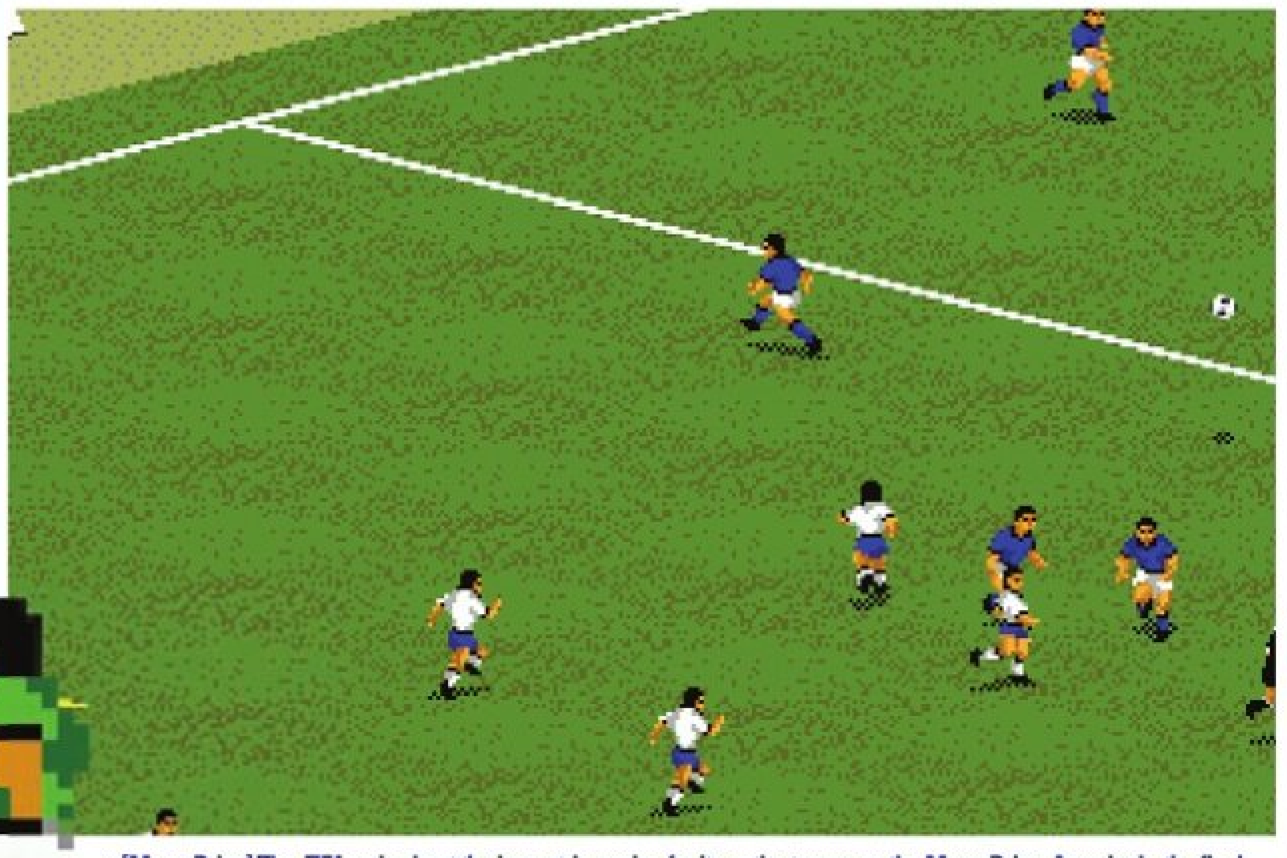


## DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

**JOHN MADDEN FOOTBALL**
**(PICTURED)**
**SYSTEM:** AMIGA, MEGA DRIVE, SNES
**YEAR:** 1990

**ROAD RASH**
**SYSTEM:** AMIGA, ATARI ST, GAME BOY, GAME GEAR, MEGA DRIVE, MEGA-CD
**YEAR:** 1991

**THE NEED FOR SPEED**
**SYSTEM:** 3DO, DOS, PLAYSTATION, SATURN
**YEAR:** 1994



» [Mega Drive] The *FIFA* series kept the isometric engine for its entire tenure on the Mega Drive. Amazingly, the final release for the system was *FIFA 2000*.



5. FIFA 98: Road To World Cup



6. FIFA 99



7. FIFA 2000



8. FIFA 2001



9. FIFA Football 2002



15. FIFA 08



16. FIFA 09



17. FIFA 10



18. FIFA 11



19. FIFA 12




# FROM THE ARCHIVES

**RETRO GAMER** DIGS UP THE FILES OF THE CLASSIC COMPANIES OF OLD

# Krisalis



## Between 1987 and 2001, the British developer and publisher that sometimes output work as Teque and sometimes as Krisalis Software was responsible for dozens and dozens of amazing games. Michael Reed talks to some of the people involved

**Summing up a company as prolific as Teque/Krisalis is a slightly overwhelming task, but we'll try to break it down for you. In 1987, the company was formed as Teque Software Development Ltd. Teque was purely a developer that produced original games and conversions to be published by other companies. Teque London was a sister development company set up in 1989, and although independent of each other, the two teams often collaborated. In 1989, the company launched a publishing arm called Krisalis to publish original games created by Teque. Bar a bit of overlap between the two, Teque was dropped entirely in the early Nineties, and the Krisalis name was subsequently applied to the output of the company as both a developer and a publisher.**

The company created games for all of the popular platforms of the time, but it was particularly prominent on 8- and 16-bit home computers. It created original games, but it was also a conversion powerhouse, effortlessly moving between platforms and turning out consistently high-quality work. The list of companies that it worked with in the latter capacity is a who's who of Eighties and Nineties publishers. In short, if you had a computer of that era, you probably had at least a few games that came from the Teque/Krisalis stable.

What about the games themselves? Almost every genre is represented, and Krisalis was something of a standard bearer for 2D, sprite-based gaming. As we said, the catalogue can be divided into original games and conversions, and the ports that it carried out travelled in two main directions: coin-ops were adapted for home computer conversions, and 8-bit games were adapted into 16-bit versions. Krisalis was also a prolific porter of games to the Acorn Archimedes range.

### INSTANT EXPERT

**The company was** founded in 1987 in Rotherham by Tony Kavanagh, Peter Harrap and Shaun Hollingworth.

**Due to the** timing of the creation of the company, along with a dedication to all-formats support, Teque was an 8- and 16-bit shop from day one.

**Shaun Hollingworth worked** as a Radio Rentals engineer, as did Jon Ritman (*Head Over Heels*), although the two never met.

**A sister company,** Teque London, existed in the south of England. The two teams often co-operated, and many names, such as Matt Furniss, can be found on productions of both companies.

**The Krisalis logo** of a butterfly comes from the original, proposed name of the company: Chrysalis. On some games, it flaps its wing while the game is loading.

**The company closed** its doors on November 2001.

**In the early** days, Teque used OCP Art Studio on the Atari ST to create graphics for all the 8-bit and 16-bit computers, before switching to Deluxe Paint, first on the Amiga and later on the PC, and then Adobe Photoshop. For 3D it was Alias on a Silicon Graphics Indigo workstation, and later 3D Studio Max.

The story begins in 1983 when computers were considerably less common. Anyone who started programming in that era has an anecdote about how they first got the bug, and co-founder Shaun Hollingworth's begins when he was working as a Radio Rentals engineer: "I got into software programming when Glynn, our apprentice, brought his Sinclair ZX81 to work. I took an interest in it and he told me to take it home for a few days. That night I stayed up until about 5:30am. When Glynn asked for his computer back, I had to go buy a Sinclair Spectrum the same day."

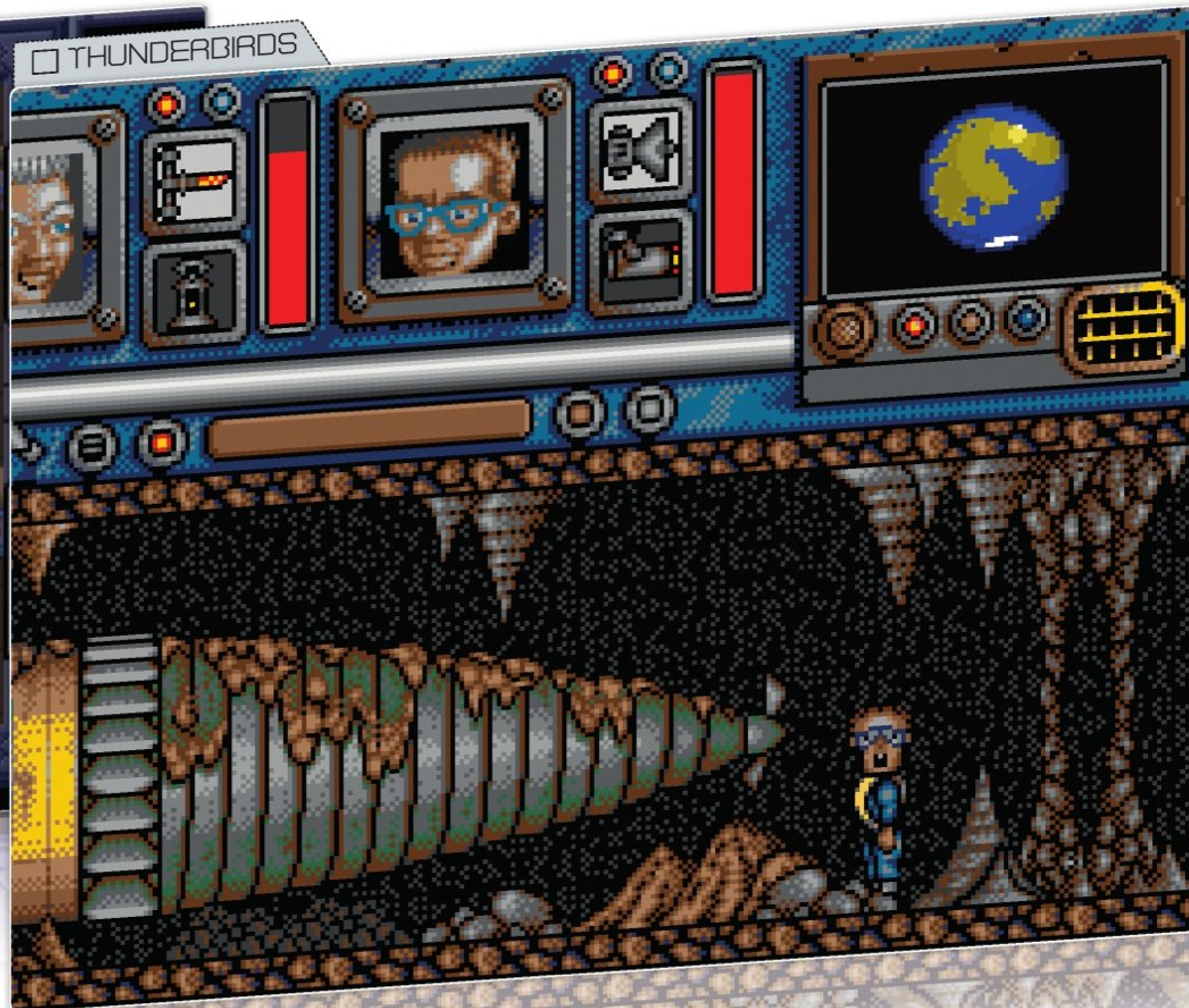
Later, a friend of his, Paul Jackson – sadly now deceased – gave him his first programming assignment. Paul, who was working at the Laskys hi-fi and electronics shop in Sheffield, got him to write an in-store demo for the Spectrum. This came to the attention of one Ian Stewart, the shop manager. Paul and Ian were soon to leave Laskys to set up a computer store called Just Micro, and, following this, Ian decided to set up a software house, which was named Gremlin Graphics.

### The Potty Pigeon

"Paul asked if I could somehow create a game based on a Commodore 64 version



THUNDERBIRDS



> **"We always wanted to get into consoles from the start, but we were locked out"**
> SHAUN HOLLINGWORTH



of a game Ian already had called *Percy The Potty Pigeon*," remembers Shaun. "I suggested some ideas, while pointing out the limitations of the Spectrum graphics compared with the Commodore 64. The game was completed, and although not really like the original version, was reasonably successful. I was offered the chance to work as a full-time games programmer at Gremlin, so I left Radio Rentals to do that."

Once employed at Gremlin, Shaun met fellow programmer Peter Harrap (*Monty Mole*, *Jack The Nipper*), and the two became good friends. He also got on well with another of the Gremlin employees, Tony Kavanagh. Tony had started as a sales manager in the record business before moving over to the games industry in 1983. After working for an outfit called Websters Software, he then worked for Ocean Software before becoming sales director at Gremlin. In 1987, feeling that they made a good team, the three decided to form their own game development company, which they christened Teque.

Tony remembers the move: "The industry was very volatile in the early days; even more so than now. Gremlin became a very successful company, eventually being sold to Infogrames Entertainment for £8.5 million. However, in 1987, all of the staff including me thought it wouldn't last till the end of the year. So when I was asked by Pete and Shaun, 'If we developed a game, could you sell it?', I didn't hesitate. Remember, at that time, it was like Peter Molyneux and David Braben asking me to form a company with them. Pete and Shaun were that important."

## Teque formed

Teque was based in Shaun's home town of Rotherham, a decision that was motivated, in part, by the availability of government grants to businesses starting up in the economically depressed north of England.

With a staff of just three, they began to work on the first Teque game, a side-on arcade adventure called *Terramex*. The concept and the name for the game was originally created by Gremlin employee Chris Kerry, who had intended to join Peter, Shaun and Tony at Teque. Chris eventually decided to stay with Gremlin but graciously agreed to let the other three create the game without him. After three months of development, the game was published by Grandslam and received excellent reviews.

As well as being a successful release, it embodied what would go on to become signature traits of future releases: the characteristic clear, colourful, cartoon-style graphics and an excellent soundtrack created by Ben Daglish, and it was, from the start, a multiplatform release. It was initially released for the Spectrum, Amstrad CPC, MSX, Commodore 64, Commodore Amiga and Atari ST. An Acorn Archimedes port was to follow later. Quickly pulling in about £40,000, it helped to cement Teque as a going concern and allowed the company to employ more full-time staff. Eventually it would employ 60 people, but ▶

### BY THE NUMBERS

**3** full-time staff at the company's formation: Tony Kavanagh, Peter Harrap and Shaun Hollingworth

**60** staff at its peak

**£40,000** profit on Teque's very first game, *Terramex*

**£10,000** cost for the initial Manchester United licence

**Over 100** games whose sound was completed by Matt Furniss in a five-year period

**15** years in business for the company

**5** full Manchester United football games, not including data disks: *Manchester United: The Official Computer Game, Manchester United Europe, Manchester United: Premier League Champions, Manchester United: The Double* and *Manchester United Championship Soccer*

**Not many** development houses were simultaneously churning out software for 8-, 16- and 32-bit computers, allowing Krisalis to compete on all fronts









Peter, Tony and Shaun would always remain the core.

Teque followed its first success by becoming a development house for hire. The developers themselves were able to capitalise on the expertise with multiple platforms that they had acquired during their time at Gremlin. The 1988 releases of *Thunderbirds*, *The Flintstones* and coin-op conversion *Pac-Mania*, all published by Grandslam, were released across all the major 8- and 16-bit platforms of the day. Offering crisp graphics, excellent soundtracks and an obvious technical familiarity with each and every target platform, it wasn't long before Teque had established itself as the go-to studio for multiformat releases. This is a point that Shaun confirmed: "When we were developing for other companies we could become a sort of one-stop shop where they could get everything done. I guess the other motive was the fact that the more platforms we supported, the more exposure we would get."




## Working environment

In 1989, at age 16, Matt Furness joined Teque as an in-house musician. He told us how he got started: "Sometime in the mid-Eighties I got a Commodore 64. I played with that a bit, but soon upgraded to an Atari ST and Steinberg Pro 24. When I eventually bought a Commodore Amiga, I started writing tracks for Amiga demos and shareware games. In 1989 I sent a demo tape of my Amiga tunes to Teque. They were looking to hire an in-house sound person, and I was local, so they got me."

Frankly, we could easily fill a few pages listing the games that Matt has worked on. Like most of the people who worked at Teque/Krisalis, he learned early on the importance of switching between platforms as needed, and much of his early work involved adapting an existing soundtrack from one machine to another.



"When I started at Teque we were primarily converting arcade games for home systems," he continues. "I would hook up a tape deck to the sound output and record everything from the sound test mode, then convert it. The first conversions I worked on were *Chase HQ*, *Robot Monsters*, *Toobin'* and *Scramble Spirits*."

Once ensconced at Teque, Matt formed a formidable partnership with Shaun, supplying soundtracks and sound effects for other companies, which became a considerable part of the company's business. In this capacity, Matt was the composer and Shaun handled the technical and programming side. "In just five years I created music and sound effects for over 100 games," Matt told us.

If you found yourself tapping your foot to the groove coming out of your Mega Drive while you were playing *Gunship* or humming along to a home computer version of *Ninja Gaiden*, it's thanks to him. Later, he came into his own as a composer of original soundtracks with a strong, original style. The 16-bit versions of *Laser Squad* and most versions of *Alien 3* are all high points in this stage of his career. His personal favourites of the tracks that he produced for Krisalis are *Soccer Kid*, *Sabre Team* and *Laser Squad*.

All of the former Teque/Krisalis employees that we spoke to had only good things to say about the company. Take programmer Nigel Little, who told us: "I still keep in contact with Tony Kavanagh, and I am so grateful

## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?


Matt Furniss

**Matt Furniss**
Still a major player in the industry, he now lives in California and works for David Perry's cloud gaming outfit Gaikai.


» Neil Adamson

**Neil Adamson**
After Krisalis shut down, artist Neil went to work for RuneSoft and BBC Worldwide. When that shut down, Nigel invited him to join Distinctive Developments as chief artist. "At first it was like going back to my early days in the business, as I was working on 2D games in a very small team again, but the mobile business has quickly progressed to iPhone/iPad quality and I'm now working on some enjoyable 3D projects."

**Nigel Little and Keith Birkett**
Nigel and Keith left Krisalis in September 1994 in order to form their own development company, Distinctive Developments Ltd. "We decided to pitch ourselves as experts in converting games between different platforms and we found our first project, *Primal Rage*, pretty quickly," Nigel told us. "Since then Distinctive has gone through various incarnations, changing as the games industry changes, but I'm very happy that we've survived for so many years."

**Tony Kavanagh**
Tony now runs Kavcom, a digital publishing specialist. At the time of writing, the company has just completed a mobile remake of The Bitmap Brothers' *Z*.

**Shaun Hollingworth**
Shaun now wrestles with PC hardware as a programmer for German security company SecurStar. "I've worked for them indirectly for ten years now, since Krisalis closed," he told us.

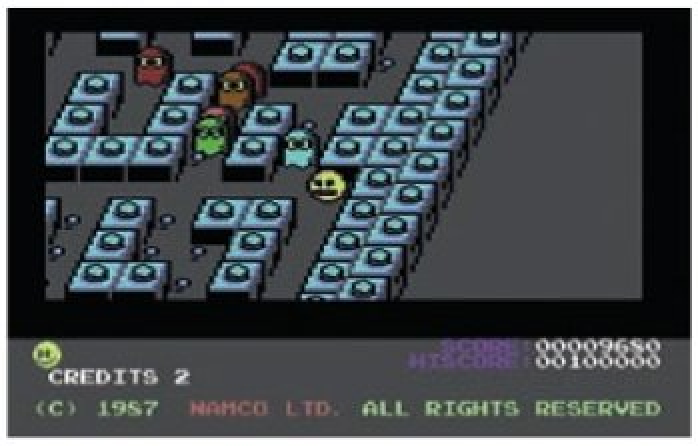

» Shaun Hollingworth

**Peter Harrap**
Having kept a low profile, Peter assisted with the Kavcom remake of *Z* and has indicated that he would like to resurrect the *Monty Mole* series.

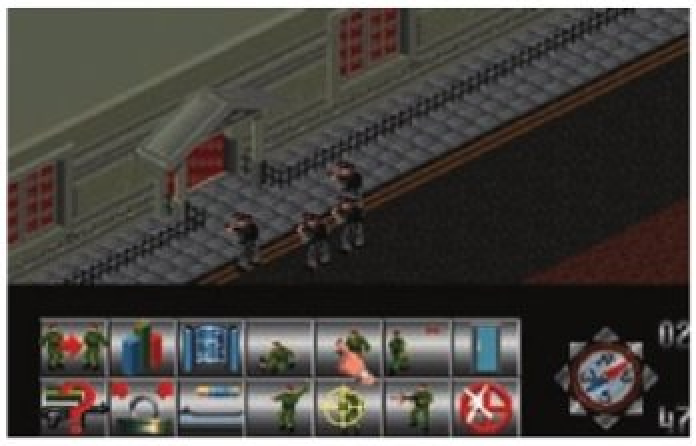
## TIMELINE

- **1984** GREMLIN GRAPHICS FORMED BY IAN STUART
- **1987** TEQUE SOFTWARE FORMED BY PETER HARRAP, TONY KAVANAGH AND SHAUN HOLLINGWORTH
- **1988** *TERRAMEX*, THE FIRST TEQUE RELEASE, IS PUBLISHED BY GRANDSLAM ENTERTAINMENT TO CONSIDERABLE SUCCESS
- **1988** *PAC-MANIA*, *THUNDERBIRDS* AND *THE FLINTSTONES* ARE RELEASED
- **1989** *LASER SQUAD* RELEASED
- **1989** KRISALIS STARTED AS A PUBLISHING SUBSIDIARY
- **1990** THE COMPANY'S FIRST MANCHESTER UNITED GAME IS RELEASED
- **1991** COMPANY RENAMED TO KRISALIS SOFTWARE LTD
- **1993** *SOCCER KID* AND *ARABIAN NIGHTS* RELEASED FOR STANDARD AMIGAS
- **1994** KEITH BIRKETT AND NIGEL LITTLE LEAVE KRISALIS TO FORM DISTINCTIVE SOFTWARE
- **2001** THE FINAL GAME FROM KRISALIS, A PORT OF EA'S *THE FA PREMIER LEAGUE STARS 2001*, IS RELEASED
- **Nov 2001** KRISALIS CLOSES DOWN

» [C64] *Pac-Mania* is not quite as shiny as the 16-bit versions, but the gameplay is smooth.




» [DOS] *Sabre Team* is an isometric turn-based tactical strategy game.



for the opportunity that Tony, Pete and Shaun gave me back in 1990 to get into this great industry."

His current company, Distinctive Games, has been in business since 1994 and is now primarily known for handheld gaming, but the story of how he got into computers is fairly typical of any computer-mad kid of the Eighties: "A friend of mine had a BBC Micro, and within five minutes of playing with it I knew that personal computing was what I wanted to be involved in. Fairly soon after, although it felt like a lifetime at the time, I got a ZX81 as a birthday present. It was a fascinating time; my friends had all sorts of different machines from C64 to Oric and Dragon 32, and we spent many hours discussing – arguing about – the pros and cons of each one. I progressed to a ZX Spectrum and eventually to an Amstrad 6128. It wasn't until the Amstrad that I started programming seriously. This led to me having some small utility programs published in one of the Amstrad magazines, earning me the princely sum of £20!

"After college, I started applying for jobs, but the one I really wanted was a job I saw in the local paper for a games programmer at Krisalis. I still remember the day I heard the news that I'd got the job. I couldn't believe my luck and I couldn't wait to get started."

### Into the third dimension

Krisalis was largely a 2D shop. Nigel theorised on the reasons behind this: "I was with Krisalis from 1990 until late 1994, and our main platforms were the Amiga, ST and Archimedes. So, while we experimented with 3D on these machines, the fact was the results didn't look very impressive. Pete Harrap was a technical genius, and along with several other people in the company we fully understood the required technology to make 3D games. However, the commercial reality was that 2D games made up the vast majority of the industry at the time."

Artist Neil Adamson had worked on games such as *Advanced Pinball Simulator* and *Treasure Island Dizzy* for Codemasters before becoming a full-time employee of Teque and concurred with this view: "It was an exciting time to be an artist when 3D came into the industry, but at Krisalis it was a gradual change from 2D. At first we were just rendering sprites and loading screens to use in 2D games, before moving on to full 3D in projects like *Theme Park* on the PlayStation. However, I don't think Krisalis made an original 3D game that was as memorable as the 2D ones. Perhaps that is why we struggled to survive in the end, as other companies had invested more in 3D and left us behind a bit."

### Glory glory Man United

Nowadays, a football tie-in to a computer game would seem like a prestigious, not to mention expensive, business deal, but in the early Nineties the potential wasn't widely recognised. Consequently, football-mad Tony Kavanagh brokered a multi-game deal with Manchester United for an incredible £10,000. The finished game, *Manchester United* (1990) combined management features with a raised side- ▶

> **"It was my idea and everyone hated me for it"**
>
> TONY KAVANAGH, ON ALL OF THE FOOTBALL GAMES

### GIVING THE LOVE

As well as supporting all of the mainstream platforms of the time, Teque/Krisalis was the champion of the platforms that never quite had the success that they deserved. Apart from being one of the biggest publishers on the Acorn Archimedes thanks to the staff's tireless efforts in terms of conversions, the company also supported the 3DO and the Amiga CD32.

*Sabre Team* was an early CD32 release, and *Soccer Kid* and *Arabian Nights* are two of the most lauded releases on the platform. 3DO users were most grateful for the ports of *Alone In The Dark 1* and *2*, *Soccer Kid* and *Star Fighter 3000*.



### NEIL ADAMSON: THE ARTIST'S TALE

"My parents bought me a 48K Spectrum for Christmas when I was about 14 and I started doing graphics for fun using a program called Melbourne Draw, which was a bit like Etch A Sketch. A few years later I had tapes full of my work, and so I sent some examples out to about ten different companies to see if I could get a freelance job while I was studying graphic design at art college. Eventually I got a call from one of the Darling brothers at Codemasters offering me a job, and I was soon doing the graphics for games like *Advanced Pinball Simulator* and *Treasure Island Dizzy*. It seems archaic now, but I used to get a list of what was needed through the post and then send my work back to the programmer on a cassette. I was on holiday in Skegness, browsing through a weekly computer magazine in WHSmith, when I spotted an advert for Teque Software. I was determined to get that job!"




» [Amiga] This is where it all started for Teque: *Terramex*.



» [Amiga] The timing of the deal with Manchester United couldn't have been better.



## SIX OF THE BEST



**Mad Professor Mariarti** (1990)
A colourful platformer in the classic mould. Guide the titular character through five levels of jumping, projectile-hurling and inventory-combining goodness while collecting credits to buy better weapons. At all times, the cheerful and well-animated sprites entertain, as does the Matt Furniss soundtrack.



**Shadow Worlds** (1992)
Guide your team of space marines around a gigantic futuristic research facility while trying to piece together why contact has been lost. The real-time lighting effects are integrated into the gameplay, and the intuitive mouse interface makes this a relatively easy game to get into, considering its complexity.



**Laser Squad** (1990)
It must have been galling for owners of 16-bit computers that an instant classic in the realm of turn-based tactical combat had been locked away on older machines such as the Spectrum. However, Teque came to the rescue with yet another high-quality conversion, this time of Julian Gollop's classic.



**Soccer Kid** (1993)
By 1993, the cute platformer was in danger of wearing out its welcome. Fortunately, Krisalis found a way to make the genre fresh again. Having said that, the influence of the best console releases is obvious. Nonetheless, this is a game for hardcore players rather than newbies, and the difficulty is rather high.



**Pac-Mania** (1990)
Namco got things right with this update of *Pac-Man*, expanding the gameplay slightly while taking advantage of newer technology. Teque's home ports maintained the high standards, bringing the technical expertise of the team to bear. Smooth action and excellent gameplay – what's not to like?



**Manchester United** (1990)
Swapping the more common overhead view for a side-on perspective, this was one of a string of Man United tie-ins produced by Krisalis. The graphics are of an excellent standard, featuring digitised photos and even video sequences. Optionally, the game offered some basic management features for the nerdier enthusiast.

## TWO TO AVOID



**The Flintstones** (1989)
Voted 93rd worst game ever by fans of the system on Lemon Amiga. To be completely honest, it's poor rather than pure evil. If nothing else, a game that has great-looking graphics attached to a desirable licence along with such completely mediocre gameplay probably inspires slightly more ire than it deserves. It's below average, and why mess with something below average when there's so much average or even above average stuff to be enjoying instead? That's what we say.

**James Pond** (1990-91)
Conversion supremo Krisalis could do no wrong, particularly on its pet platform, the Acorn Archimedes. Or could it? The main problem was that the original versions of these games were based very heavily upon peculiarities of the Amiga. In the case of something like *SWIV*, Nigel Little had used the raw power of the 32-bit ARM processor to replicate the tricky Amiga hardware and produce an outstanding port. Where did it start to go wrong with these two conversions? The first game cannot be completed due to bugs. The second flickers and stutters in a way that must have had Amiga owners howling with laughter. We forgive it due to so many other superb ports to the platform.




on view of the pitch, and the series became a money-spinner for the company.

*Manchester United* was also one of the few Krisalis releases for a Sega console. On the Mega Drive the game was retitled *European Club Soccer* and published by Virgin. According to Shaun, the company would have been interested in doing more work for consoles than it did, but developer access was tightly controlled by the hardware manufacturers and it was difficult to break in. However, it's worth bearing in mind that Teque did do some support work for console games in the areas of music and also development boards.

Other football games followed, such as *Manchester United Europe* (1991), *John Barnes European Football* (1992) and *Manchester United Championship Soccer* (1995). A fair proportion of the overall Krisalis catalogue was dedicated to other football games and sports games in general.

Football played a part in a release that both drew a line under the classic era of the company and coincided with the final stage of the 16-bit era. The football theme of *Soccer Kid* (1993) is hardly surprising, given the company history, although it is in no way a conventional football game. It's a platforming tour de force and it enjoyed a release for the standard Amiga in 1993, with versions for the SNES, CD32, 3DO and others following later. By the time of release, cutesy platform games were becoming a bit tired but, sure enough, *Soccer Kid* managed to find a new approach. Along with the usual enemies to be thwarted and traps to jump over, the complexities of football control add a genuinely unique twist.

It was a project that Nigel was heavily involved in as a programmer. "My final and biggest challenge was to be lead programmer on *Soccer Kid*," he recalls. "I spent two years on this project, first developing the Amiga version and then going on to do the CD32 and 3DO versions too. I therefore have a love/hate relationship with this game; I'm proud of what we eventually achieved, but it took so much out of me, as I spent over a year doing 14-hour days."

Released at around the same time, *Arabian Nights* (1993) was the brainchild of Tony Kavanagh, and Shaun commented that he had a knack for judging what the public might want. With another excellent soundtrack by Matt and a similar cartoon-like introductory animation, it's clear that *Arabian Nights* is a stablemate of *Soccer Kid*. However, *Soccer Kid* is a platformer with a twist, and *Arabian Nights* is more of an arcade adventure. They also share the quality of being extremely tough. Both games enjoyed a slew of 80+ per cent scores in the magazines of the time.

Artist Neil Adamson chipped in with some reminiscences: "I think everyone who worked on *Soccer Kid* enjoyed it, and that shows in the detail we crammed in. Krisalis were developing two similar platform games at the time, so both teams were spurred on to make a better game than the other, and I think that benefited both projects."

### The later years

The mid-Nineties saw the demise of the 16-bit platforms such as the Amiga. This was accompanied by the relative failure in the marketplace of the earliest 32-bit consoles like the CD32 and the 3DO, machines of which Krisalis had been a leading supporter. During this period, Krisalis began to dabble more seriously with the IBM PC compatible, the underdog platform

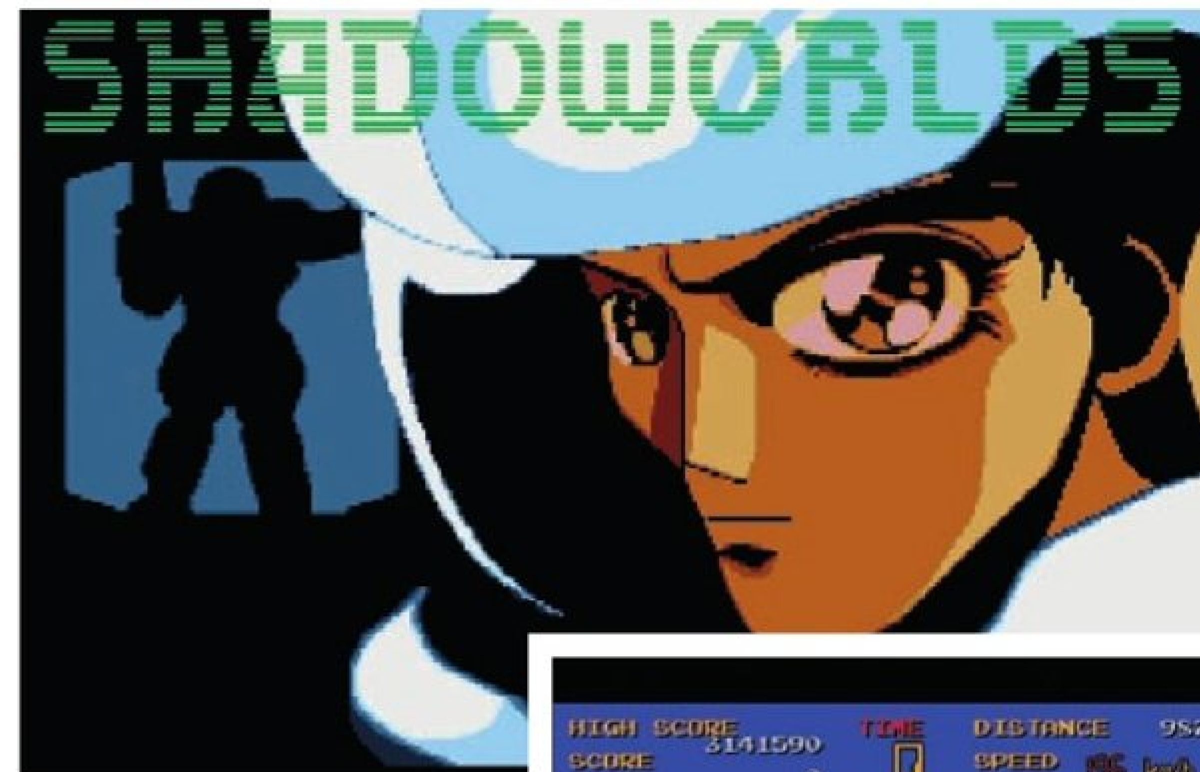



» [Spectrum] *Percy The Potty Pigeon* was quite different to the C64 original, but it got good reviews.




» [Amiga] *Blasteroids* was a coin-op conversion of Tengen's sophisticated update of *Asteroids*.










## “I now get to work with new developers who ask, ‘What’s an Amiga?’ and, ‘What’s a SID chip?’”

MATT FURNISS

that would eventually go on to rule the home computer world.

“As for the PC, we used it for a development tool, but found it restricted in ability for games,” Shaun told us. “We embraced it later, for such games as *Hill Street Blues* and some football games. We did more on it in the second half of the Nineties. Of course, the PC had advanced significantly by then.”

Internally, some of the old hands such as Nigel Little, Keith Birkett and Matt Furniss left Krisalis on good terms for pastures new, and in the wider world, the games industry was on the cusp of resembling the modern gaming scene we know today. 1994 was the year of release for both the Sega Saturn and the Sony PlayStation; a year later, Microsoft’s Windows 95 operating system would become the de facto home computer environment for running games. Consequently, a developer and publisher that wanted to stay in business had to adapt, and that’s what Krisalis did.

In many respects, it is at this point that we hit upon the conundrum of this company and the people who worked there. Few companies were better adapted to the decade when a diverse range of home computers vied for attention and new ideas were common currency. However, once the market settled down to a mere handful of standardised platforms and huge, Hollywood-style development teams, Krisalis must have seemed a tad anachronistic. This is a point that Tony Kavanagh confirmed: “This is my greatest regret. We didn’t see the change to big team development. It’s my only regret in the 28 years I’ve worked in the industry.”

That’s not to say that Krisalis didn’t continue turning out competent releases during the final five years of the company. Games like *Airport Tycoon* (2000) and *Legoland* (2000) got fair reviews, but it was clear at this point that Krisalis was no longer a titan that could nearly always guarantee a hit. The final Krisalis-developed game was a Game Boy Color port of the EA Sports PC and PlayStation game *The FA Premier League Stars 2001*.

Neil Adamson was with Krisalis to the end and has poignant memories of the final period: “Towards the end, I wasn’t enjoying the job as much as I used to. We were converting some big-name projects like *Sensible Soccer* and EA Sports’ *Premier League Manager*, but those types of games didn’t give you much freedom to be creative, and this led to a number of people leaving to work for other companies. Tony was doing his best to get any kind of work from other companies to keep us going a bit longer, and it was a tense time waiting for news about potential projects.

“It was no surprise when the company eventually closed down in November 2001, as quite a few staff had already been made redundant earlier that year. We were allowed back into the building a few weeks later to buy our equipment from the administrators, and I remember feeling sad as I left, thinking that would be the last time I’d drive away from Teque House.”

We used the word ‘conundrum’ and we meant it. A lot of commentators have stated that game development stagnated in the last decade due to a risk-averse corporate mentality. By the mid-2000s, the games industry had begun to change once again as mobile and online gaming exploded. The consummate developer working in these emerging areas needs to be able to constantly adapt and move quickly, and as often as not, that’s where you’ll see the former staff of Teque and Krisalis working. Coincidence?

### WHERE’S THE WULF?

It’s difficult to get to the bottom of what actually happened to the much-feted Amiga port of Spectrum classic *Sabre Wulf*, and the details are clearly a delicate matter to all those concerned. We can verify that Krisalis was working on it, and it was close to release when the project was abandoned. In fact, screenshots were shown in magazines. Disagreements between the various parties followed, and Tony summed up the affair, tactfully, by saying: “[The Spectrum game] is one of those games that is best remembered and not revisited.” And Shaun’s response? “I am not sure if I should really comment on that.”

### THE ARCHIMEDES CONNECTION

As well as being an all-pervading force on the 8- and 16-bit micros, the Krisalis team had a soft spot for the 32-bit Acorn Archimedes range of computers, with Shaun admitting: “I still lament the loss of the RISC OS platform.” Acorn itself lent Shaun a development machine in the early days, and *Terramex*, which was the company’s first release as a company, ended up being one of the earliest hits on the Arc. *Mad Professor Mariarti* is also one of the most fondly remembered games on the system, even though it is less well known on the original 16-bit platforms. Lots of other Krisalis classics such as *Jahangir Khan’s Squash* and *Manchester United* also enjoyed perfect conversions on the Archimedes.

Krisalis handled conversion work on some of the biggest 16-bit games of all. *Gods, Populous, SWIV, Speedball 2, Chuck Rock, Cannon Fodder, Heimdall* – all of these and more were Krisalis games to Arc owners, some of them arguably definitive versions. A typical Krisalis conversion could be relied upon to be a near-perfect re-creation of the source version, with an occasional improvement to, for example, the sound quality. Thanks to its conversions, Krisalis was probably the second most prolific publisher on the Acorn Archimedes after original games publisher The Fourth Dimension.




Special thanks: Shaun Hollingworth, Tony Kavanagh, Neil Adamson, Keith Birkett, Nigel Little and Matt Furniss.




**Although it never received sequels, Project Firestart stands as the true ancestor of the survival horror genre. John Szczepaniak tracks down several of those involved and discovers some unusual inspiration for this essential adventure**




### IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** ELECTRONIC ARTS
- » **DEVELOPER:** DYNAMIX
- » **RELEASED:** 1989
- » **PLATFORM:** COMMODORE 64
- » **GENRE:** SURVIVAL HORROR

**Tracing the origin of horror in videogames isn't easy, since it is both thematic, as in *Splatterhouse*, and the basis for gameplay, as in survival horrors like *Resident Evil*. So let's focus on survival horror as a mechanical description, whereupon players must survive a difficult horror scenario using limited resources. *Haunted House* (1982) and *3D Ant Attack* (1983) are just about acceptable primal examples. *War Of The Dead* (1987) and *Sweet Home* (1989), meanwhile, are cited as the de facto evolutionary originators, before *Alone In The Dark* and *Resident Evil* cemented 'survival horror' as a genre. Except *War Of The Dead* and *Sweet Home* are more accurately RPGs, while the de jure originator of survival horror is the slightly obscure *Project Firestart* for the Commodore 64, developed by Dynamix and released in 1989.**

Although perhaps overlooked, except by ardent C64 fans, *Firestart* takes obvious influence from Ridley Scott's *Alien* and acts as a prototype for *System Shock*, *Dead Space* and every other 'trapped in space' game. The two main people behind it were Dynamix co-founders Jeff Tunnell and Damon Slye. Unfortunately Tunnell seldom gives interviews on *Firestart*, citing it as the most difficult game he's ever worked on and even omitting it from his resume. Even so, in 2009 he spoke with IGN on the game's creation, referencing Electronic Arts founder Trip Hawkins, who once asked if computers could make you cry. Tunnell explained that at Dynamix they thought this would be difficult, and instead wondered if computers could induce fear.

Fortunately we were able to contact Slye, who graciously answered our questions and elaborated on Tunnell's earlier explanation. "Our EA producer, Joe Ybarra, was inspired by the game *Karateka*, and wanted to do something similar, but with a bigger scope. We were all inspired by the movie *Alien*, which is really a classic horror film, not sci-fi! Our goal was to make a game that was frightening. Of course, that's difficult on an 8-bit computer because you can't serve up a lot of graphics easily."

Ybarra, meanwhile, revealed the scope of EA's involvement: "Wow, it wasn't until you posed that question that I even remembered *Firestart*. Back in those days of EA, when we were building projects with Dynamix,



» Slye on the 2006 fan remake: "I loved it, and loved that someone had liked the game enough to do a remake."

we were on average working on about a dozen to 15 titles at once." Even so, memories were rekindled and Ybarra did have creative influence on *Firestart*, explaining: "Damon is correct, because a lot of the work I did with Dynamix was collaborative – we would work together to determine what sort of content we wanted to produce, and what sort of technology we had."

*Project Firestart*'s story takes place in 2061, with the player controlling government agent Jon Hawkins, sent to investigate the Prometheus, a genetics research vessel orbiting Saturn, which has ceased communication. To prevent the experiment contaminating the solar system, your task is to retrieve the science log and then self-destruct the vessel, otherwise your superiors will detonate it via remote control. Confirmation that the proverbial has hit the fan comes after docking, when you find a body and severed arm, the victim having written the word 'danger' in his own blood. Soon you encounter the genetically modified creatures that caused all this and the fight is on to escape alive and see one of the multiple endings, preferably with the love interest in tow. Although it may seem clichéd, there's actually a clever allegory beneath the surface, with some enlightened influences. As Slye explained: "Of course there was the influence of *Frankenstein*, which really goes back to the perils of man's desire to seek knowledge at any cost, plus other things like *Faust*, and the Greek myth of Prometheus bringing fire, or knowledge, to mankind, hence the name *Firestart* – originally we were going to title it *The Prometheus Encounter*. Oh, and Adam and Eve in the Garden with the tree of knowledge of good and evil. It's a universal theme."

We also asked if there had been any concern regarding the game's gory nature, since along with severed arms there are decapitated heads and exploded torsos. "I don't recall specifics," he says. "I know there was some talk about one of the failure scenarios: if the player was too late, the creature would get into the sleeping chamber and there was a shot of a bloody corpse in one of the capsules. I'm sure you've seen the package – the back shows this violent scene. It looks like the EA marketing guys wanted to use violence to sell the game, since out of all the screenshots, they chose to have three out of five violent ones."

**"We bought a big green monster toy from Toys R Us and it became the basis of the monster in the game"**

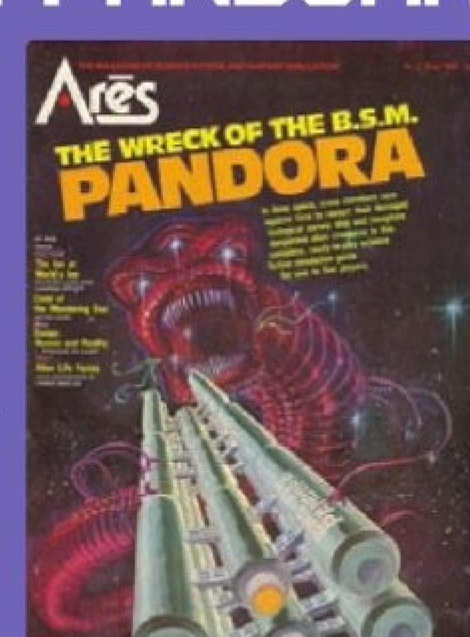
Another interesting source of inspiration concerns the creatures themselves. Kevin Ryan was a co-partner and programmer at Dynamix, and in 2007 published a personal account on Adventure Classic Gaming. He wrote: "We bought a big green monster toy from the Toys R Us store that was near our office and it became the basis of the monster in the game. Even with the limited number of colours available and small screen resolution, you could still recognise the monster as coming from the toy. I last saw that toy in the kids' play room in one of Dynamix's later offices."

The story was backed up by Slye: "This was before the internet and Google image searches. We did buy some toy monsters for inspiration, and they did end up in the play room. We wanted something that didn't look like a clone of [HR Giger's] alien." The toy was from the *Inhumanoids* range by Hasbro, based on the cartoon, and depicted a plant-based creature called Tendril. *Firestart* only featured this one variety, initially in green, and then a tougher, evolved form in white. We asked Slye if he'd wanted more. "No, we just wanted the one. If we had done a sequel, then that would have been good."

## WRECK OF THE PANDORA

The *Wreck Of The BSM Pandora* board game by SPI was on Ybarra's mind during development of *Firestart*. As it turns out, there was also an unreleased Apple game based on the board game, and although this had no influence on the project, it's still interesting to know.

Ybarra revealed: "I have an Apple II version of the *Wreck Of The Pandora* game created by the original designers at SPI for publication by Apple. It was never released, as Apple decided not to publish games as part of their marketing strategy. Aside from the original creators of the game, I believe I have the only existing copy of it. Having said that, I don't recall using this material in any way during the development of *Project Firestart*. As I recall both [*Voyage Of The Pandora*] and *Wreck Of The Pandora* were intended to be solitaire board games, so they were ideal for a computer game."





» [C64] The cut-scenes were regularly quite gory, showing the effects of the rampant creatures on board.



The *Inhumanoids* toy Tendril by Hasbro, which influenced the creature's design, stands a massive 36cm (14 inches) tall. Inset: an in-game shot.

An even more interesting though subtler influence was revealed by Ybarra: "There's another paradigm that this can take on as well, and that comes from the old board game years of Simulations Publications, Inc (SPI). I'm an old-school wargamer, and because of that, one of the things that elements of *Firestart* could be drawn from was *Wreck Of The Pandora*, a board game made by SPI in the early Eighties. That game was unusual in that it had a lot of really clever play mechanics and was essentially a survival horror, where you're on the Pandora, which is a spacecraft with a menagerie of [alien creatures], and these have broken out and are now a threat. Your job, as the player, is to get the ship up and running again, because there are parts that are broken. I do remember as we were contemplating *Firestart*'s design, I don't recall bringing this up directly, but I do know that because I was familiar with this board game, and I knew what we were trying to build, I could use some of the play techniques from the board game in the context of *Firestart*. Several projects that I worked on have their origins in board games."

With the Prometheus having both gameplay-specific areas and superfluous rooms such as an arcade and baths, we asked Slye about balancing realism against fun. "It was organic," he replies. "On things like this you come at it from both sides: you build something that seems plausible and realistic, but then as you design the game flow, you adapt the layout to meet the gameplay needs."

Of course, the issue still to address is Tunnell's assertion that this was such a difficult project to complete. Ybarra agrees, citing how it pushed the C64 to its limits: "Now that you bring this up I do recall how arduous the test cycle was. Both bug testing and play testing. Jeff is right; it seemed liked every time I was building a product on these 8-bit machines I was always right on the frontier of breaking something, running out of memory or especially video capabilities, because back in those days you had to work against the screen refresh. Oh man, we did all kinds of amazing compression stuff to get every last byte of memory out of the machine."

**"Elements of Firestart could be drawn from Wreck Of The Pandora, which was a board game made by SPI in the early Eighties"**

We asked Slye if he felt that *Firestart* would have been better suited to other hardware. "Yes, on the Amiga we could have done a lot more with graphics and sounds, but the C64 was the dominant computer at the time. EA saw the Amiga as the system to revolutionise gaming. However, after disappointing sales, I recall an email from Trip Hawkins to all the developers that said: 'If you know 6502, start coding!' EA did a 180, and pushed all of its efforts back to the C64. I don't regret building the game for the C64. It was a good challenge to make something fun and scary within its hardware limitations. I think we wanted to have more cut-scenes, but with the C64 the disk loads took too long. It would break the scary mood and slow down the experience, so we tried to require swaps only when it was really worth the burden. We used to joke that the easiest way to scare the player [during disk loading] would have instead been to put up text saying 'Disk formatting…'."

Ask any *Firestart* fan and they'll recall the sometimes agonising disk swaps and loading waits it required, since it utilised four disk sides for specific ship areas. Ybarra himself remembers it well, since this also affected development: "If it's a multi-disk product, the 1541 drive on the C64 was an awful piece of hardware, and I personally destroyed at least five of them. We probably went through a drive, maybe two drives a month. We just hammered that floppy disk, which you could



» [C64] Slye when asked about the game's ethnically diverse cast: "That's just what worked best with the C64's palette."




» [C64] You can't reload the laser rifle, and they're in short supply, so sometimes it's best to run away from the creatures.



» [C64] You can communicate with HQ in this room, not that they offer you much help.



get away with on the Apple II, but you put that on a C64 and you killed drives. It was pretty ugly."

Although *Firestart* suffered from hardware limitations and perhaps didn't receive the attention it deserved, most recall it fondly. As Slye says: "I'm proud of the game; there were many challenges for all of us. On a design level it went way beyond other games out there like *Karateka*. The non-linearity was a real challenge, and later games like the ones by Cinemaware were more limited in this respect, though I also liked those games. *Firestart* was a very different type of game for us as a studio. We did some very fancy tricks to achieve compelling sets, like the nice shot in the windowed walkway with outer space in the background. That involved using the same sprite in multiple locations on the screen at the same time – we would redefine the sprite on the interrupt, so effectively doubled the number of sprites the C64 had. When I say 'we', I refer to Paul Bowman, who was lead programmer, and who I am still working with today at Mad Otter. It is always a happy surprise when people remember some of the old games we worked on."

Today Damon Slye is at Mad Otter Games, which recently released *A Mystical Land* (**game.mystical-land.com**). Joe Ybarra, meanwhile, is program chair for games production at Collins College in Arizona.

Special thanks to Ryan Davies, aka TwoHeadedBoy on the forum for supplying the excellent Tendril photo.. Thanks also to the ever excellent Mat Allen.

## DAMON SLYE ON GAMES



"I was never a fan of making movies on a computer. The medium is interactive, and not restricted to a linear narrative, so why design a game to copy a more limited medium like film? A lot of people envied Hollywood, and wanted to break into Hollywood, but for me I think that's disrespectful to our medium. At the time games were a small industry, but now it's much bigger than film. I love film personally, but if you're going to be a game developer, make games. I think the right approach is to look at films, and use the higher level concepts like immersion, use of sound, suspense and so on – these things work well on a computer. I remember suspense was something I learned about [through *Firestart*]. It sounds obvious, but how do you actually create suspense? Of course the trick is simple: create a situation that threatens the player with an outcome they don't want, and then delay the resolution of the situation. Literally, you are leaving the resolution suspended. A game has advantages over film or books because you can have the resolution dependent on the player's performance. This makes the player nervous, which stirs up emotions."



## DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

**ARCTIC FOX**
**SYSTEM:** AMIGA, APPLE II, ATARI ST, COMMODORE 64, DOS, ZX SPECTRUM
**YEAR:** 1986

**RISE OF THE DRAGON**
(PICTURED)
**SYSTEM:** AMIGA, DOS, MEGA-CD, MAC
**YEAR:** 1990

**THE ADVENTURES OF WILLY BEAMISH**
**SYSTEM:** SPECTRUM, AMSTRAD, MSX
**YEAR:** 1991




**The only *Castlevania* game released for the Mega Drive, Konami pulled out all the stops to ensure that *Bloodlines* was a memorable episode that would live up to the series' heritage in fine bloody fashion.** Though it makes a few subtle tweaks to the traditional formula, it's another series high point that, while it doesn't quite live up to the majesty of *Rondo Of Blood*, *Symphony Of The Night* and *Super Castlevania IV*, comes a good solid fourth in many fans' eyes. This month we wield the Vampire Killer once more, gorge on garlic bread and step into the dark to take on Dracula. Thankfully, it never gets boring.

## Axe

A powerful weapon but fiddly to aim accurately, the axe is thrown high into the air so doesn't travel very far. Most useful for taking out flying enemies.

## Boomerang

This useful but puzzling weapon launches a sharp boomerang weapon in front of you but then annoyingly never returns. Worst boomerang ever.

## Holy Water

This is a weak but effective weapon for clearing a path. Smashed bottles blaze a trail of potent spray on the ground, inflicting damage to on-foot enemies.

## Alcarde Spear

Wielded by Eric, the spear offers slightly better reach than the whip. It also allows him to vault high into the air to reach otherwise inaccessible areas.

## Vampire Killer

It's the Vampire Killer. It's a whip. It's iconic, and it belongs to the Belmont family. You can use it to swing over large gaps like Indiana Jones. That's about it.

# MEMORABLE MOMENTS




## It's just bloody good

*Bloodlines* uses graphical muscles we didn't even know the Mega Drive had to deliver not only a great *Castlevania* but a fantastic action game to show what the console could be capable of in the hands of a seasoned developer. Though notably short for a *Castlevania* game at only six stages, *Bloodlines* retained all the familiar hack-and-slash gameplay you would expect. Also, Sega's slightly more laid-back approach to mature content allowed Konami to up the gore for the game's Japanese and US release. This makes *Bloodlines* one of the gloomiest and most atmospheric entries in the series.




## Exemplary in its design

*Castlevania* games are renowned for their wonderful level design, and *Bloodlines* doesn't break that tradition. As well as sounding the part thanks to its wonderfully emotive score by famed *SOTN* composer Michiru Yamane, the design and layout of each stage was of an incredibly high standard, full of inventive moments that made each an entertaining but tricky minefield to circumvent. Rising water, falling walkways and giant pendulums joined with the throngs of skeletons, bats and minotaurs to create an action-adventure, the likes of which Mega Drive owners had rarely seen before.



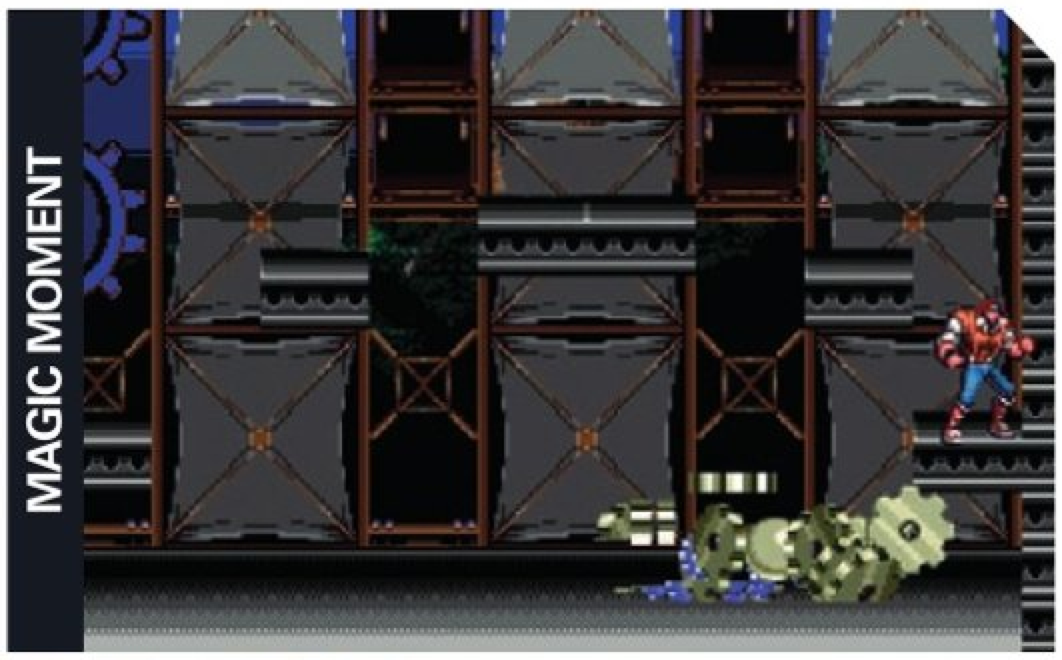

## The werewolf gets it

Picking a best boss in a *Castlevania* episode is never easy, and *Bloodlines* features a tasty selection of monstrous mayors worthy of recognition. For sheer freakishness, we'd opt for the giant lumbering Frankenstein's monster or young girl that changes into a hideous moth, but for impressiveness it has to go to the foe that awaits our heroes around the middle of the first stage. This fire-breathing beast attacks by howling into the air to shatter glass windows, forcing players to dodge the falling shards. It shows early on the lofty production values and imagination flowing throughout *Bloodlines*.




## Mr Whippy

Though *Castlevania III* was the first in the series to introduce multiple characters, *Bloodlines* offered the choice between two heroes from the outset: vampire hunter John Morris, a descendant of the Belmont family and wielder of the famous Vampire Killer whip; and Eric Lecarde, a master lanceman with a score to settle with the niece of Dracula. Your selection makes little difference to the story, but it does have an effect on how you get around: while Eric can tether his whip to ledges to swing over gaps, Eric must rely on vaulting. Best character is a tough call, but the Vampire Killer clinches it for us.




## Clockwork fright

As he's not actually all that menacing, we decided against awarding this transforming cog monster the honour of best boss. But he does put up a fight that ranks among several standout moments in *Bloodlines*. With a form made up of a series of cogs that allow him to transform into a number of different things, giving him a seemingly bottomless repertoire of attacks, this impressively animated cog monster really shows the visual, creative and technical flair of *Bloodlines* coming together in perfect unison – like well-oiled cogs, in fact. Due to this, it most certainly deserves highlighting here.




## It's Pisa time

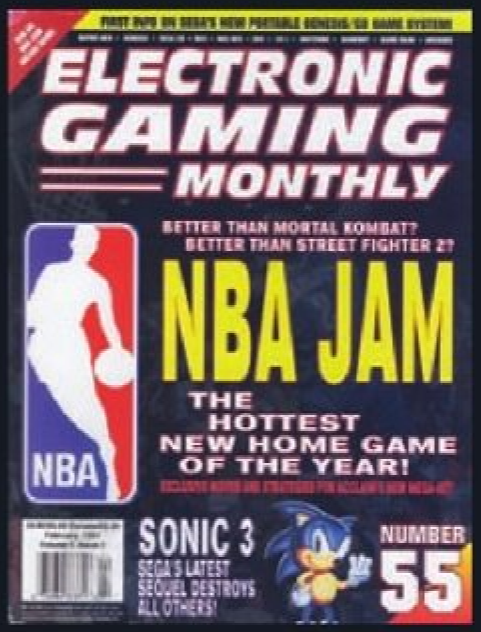
Unlike other *Castlevania* games, the stages in *Bloodlines* are set all over Europe. They include a castle in England, a German munitions factory and a leaning tower in Italy, and it's the latter that provides the best stage in *Bloodlines*. The entire third stage is set in Pisa and is basically just one epic battle to reach the top of its leaning tower. The level is a display of interesting design, great visuals and clever graphical effects, from impressive parallax scrolling to pseudo-3D effects, and once you reach its top the stage ends with a climactic battle against a huge demon bat thing while the tower spins.




## IN THE KNOW

- **PLATFORM:** MEGA DRIVE
- **PUBLISHER:** KONAMI
- **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- **RELEASED:** 1994
- **GENRE:** ACTION

## What the press said… ages ago




**EGM, 33/40**

"This cart has all the great graphics and sounds that Konami is known for. The option of choosing between two characters is cool, plus their special abilities are also great. This game is a must-have for Genesis owners."

## What we think

While some *Castlevania* purists may have a lower opinion of *Bloodlines* for its short running time and emphasis on action over exploration, with great level design, slick presentation and memorable bosses it's still a quality instalment.




# GARY PENN

**He was the envy of every Commodore 64 gamer. Gary Penn got to play and eulogise about all the latest titles during the machine's golden age. He later did the same for the 16-bits before moving into the games industry, where he remains today. Paul Drury meets a media legend**

GARY'S FIRST EXPERIENCE of computers was typing swear words on a ZX81 at his local WHSmith before running out of the shop. He later progressed to writing equally passionate prose in the pages of *Zzap!64*, first as a staff writer and later as editor. He had spells on *The Games Machine* and *Commodore User* and enjoyed great success as the launch editor of *The One*. In the Nineties, he moved into game development, working as a producer at Konami, BMG, DMA Design and Rockstar Games. Since 2000, he has worked at Denki and still has all his own hair.

**RETRO GAMER: The first most of us saw of you was as a drawing in *Zzap!64*, grinning with your thumbs aloft. Did you have to hold that pose while the artist sketched you in those days?**
**GARY PENN:** I was 18, Julian [Rignall, fellow *Zzap!* writer] was 19 and we were both cocky, naive and very self-conscious. Our editor, Chris Anderson, said, 'We're going to get pictures of you so Oli Frey can sketch them.' We had to stand outside this pub in Yeovil, pulling these stupid faces, thinking, 'We don't want to be fucking doing this.' A few years later, I probably would have been all for it.

**RG: So, tell us how you managed to land every Commodore 64 owner's dream job. We assume you excelled at computer science and English at school…**
**GP:** Oh, I fucked my A-levels up. After leaving school I got a job on a building site with my dad, plus I was redoing my English O-level, because I'd failed that.

**RG: Clearly you were destined for a career in games journalism, then.**
**GP:** Clearly. I was also doing a stint at Currys and I was playing lots of games with people who hung around in the shop. I started submitting high scores to *Personal Computer Games* magazine that Chris Anderson was editing. One I sent in was for *Ancipital*, which I think I finished first. I really liked that game and a lot of what Jeff Minter was doing at the time. I liked guys trying to do different things. Even at that point, I'd played so many games I was getting bored and looking for something original. It must be how people become drug addicts. They get numb to the buzz and are always looking for a new high. There are definitely parallels there…

**RG: Put the pipe down, Gary, and tell us how Chris ended up offering you the gig at *Zzap!64*.**
**GP:** Sorry, yeah. *Personal Computer Games* were running a Gamer of the Year competition in 1984 and I got into the final five. We went to the offices in London and had a play-off on five new games on different machines. It was pretty feisty; five cocky, competitive teenagers. I came third and Julian came second, I think. When the magazine closed down, Chris and Bob Wade, who'd worked with him there, hooked up with Newsfield, who were doing *Crash* at the time for the Spectrum and thought they ought to do the same thing for the C64. The thing with Chris, and why he's gone on to have such insane success, is that he has so much conviction and enthusiasm that he'll make ideas, even stupid ones, work. His plan was to get enthusiasts, people that really played and understood games, to write and engage with other people that play games. His idea was: who better to write about games than people that are really good at them? They must know what the hell they're talking about!

**RG: So he remembered those five likely lads and rang you all up?**
**GP:** He certainly rang three of us up and he did give us a written test, presumably because he didn't want complete arseholes who couldn't write. From that, Julian and I got the break and at the start of



## SELECTED TIMELINE

**MAGAZINES**
**Zzap!64** 1985-87
**The Games Machine** 1987
**Commodore User** 1987-1988
**The One** 1988-1990
**Amiga Power** 1991-1993

**GAMES**
**Batman Returns** 1992
**Frontier: Elite II** 1993
**Grand Theft Auto** 1997
**Body Harvest** 1998
**Space Station Silicon Valley** 1998
**GTA2** 1999
**Tanktics** 1999
**Wild Metal Country** 1999
**Denki Blocks!** 2001
**Go! Go! Beckham!** 2002
**Crackdown** 2007
**Big Cup Cricket** 2010
**Juggle!** 2010
**Big Hit Baseball** 2011
**Quarrel** 2011

**"Who better to write about games than people that are really good at them? They must know what the hell they're talking about!"**

1985 we moved down to Yeovil, because Chris had something in his contract saying he could run the magazine from where he lived. He had quite a bit of control. I mean, Newsfield didn't like the name *Zzap!*, but he got to stick with it.

**RG: You were 18 years old, moving to a new town to work on a magazine that didn't exist yet. Sounds daunting.**

**GP:** 'Trepidation' is probably the best word. A mixture of excitement and nervousness. We had this perception we'd be sitting round all day playing games, which would be fucking great…

**RG: In the editorial of issue 1 of *Zzap!*, Chris makes a bold statement about all three of you playing every game and then spending ages arguing about its merits. So we assume you were playing games all day.**

**GP:** It's a lovely idea and also totally mad, because you're tripling your overheads. What I really admire about Chris is that he thinks like a reader. From a reader's point of view, this is awesome. You'd get three guys, proper games players, not journalists who didn't give a shit about games, giving three diverse opinions, arguing and debating, and you'd get to know whose opinion was most to your taste. Bob liked his strategy games, Julian was more arcadey and I liked eclectic stuff…

**RG: Sounds great but time-consuming.**

**GP:** Those first reviews took forever! We were working all the time. We hadn't done it before; there was a huge volume of games to get through and we sincerely believed all three of us had to play them right through. As games got bigger, you just couldn't do it. We ended up having a lead reviewer who'd play it extensively and the other two would play it a bit, watch the main guy play it and get a sense of the thing, and then bring in their experience of playing other similar games. You had to take short cuts. There just wasn't time to

# * FIVE TO PLAY

## ZZAP!64







OKAY, SO YOU can't technically 'play' a magazine, but back in the Eighties, scanning the pages of *Zzap!64* for news of the latest releases was often as thrilling as actually playing them. It became the bible for Commodore 64 gamers, with passionate, informed, trustworthy and always entertaining content. From the striking Oli Frey covers to the antics of Rockford and Thing on a Spring scribbled in the margins, the magazine had a distinctive personality and a strong relationship with its loyal readership. It made stars of game programmers through candid interviews and game diaries, and of the reviewers themselves, whose pencil-sketched faces appeared next to their prose – a tradition that **Retro Gamer** is proud to keep alive. For more on this groundbreaking magazine, visit the excellent Def Guide To Zzap!64 (**www.zzap64.co.uk**), where, along with a wealth of archived material and insider information, you'll be able to download the fan-produced issue 107 from 2002 and the Def Tribute, which was given away free with **RG18**.

## BODY HARVEST



THIS EARLY OFFERING from DMA offers more than just shooting alien scum. The disturbing plot – humans were planted on Earth by aliens and now they're back to gorge on their crop – leads to time-travelling, vintage vehicles and blasting of spidery invaders. Gary: "Initially it was supposed to be a 3D *Defender*-type game. I was there for the Nintendo meetings, which were really interesting. Important people came over and went through what *Body Harvest* should be but they were never forceful. And a lot got lost in translation." This might explain why Nintendo dropped the game, but it was published by Midway and remains impressive stuff in any language.

## SPACE STATION SILICON VALLEY



THE N64 IS home to plenty of *Mario 64* wannabes, but *Silicon Valley* has enough innovative ideas to warrant further exploration. You play as disembodied microchip Evo, who can possess the robotic animals that populate the valley and use their skills and interactions to explore. Much fun ensues with helicopter rabbits, hippo taunting and rats with explosive diarrhoea. Gary: "It was made by an awesome team. Very tight. The core of them went on to make *GTA III*." If you need any further recommendation, it's also the only game we are aware of that opens with some inter-species romance betwixt a dog and a sheep, though Jeff Minter may rectify this soon.

## GO! GO! BECKHAM!



A BIG NAME attached to a child-friendly platformer really doesn't bode well but *Go! Go! Beckham!* makes surprisingly good use of the licence and offers an entertaining twist on the genre to boot. Along with the usual leaping and collecting, you have a football at your feet, which you can use to battle foes and interact with in-game objects. Think of it as a spiritual successor to *Soccer Kid*, but with faster feet and better ball control, or perhaps *Goldenballs Visits Yoshi's Island*. Gary isn't wholly satisfied with the final pass, mind. "It's an okay little game and I know people like it more than I do. We never really did as much as we wanted to with it, though."

## DENKI BLOCKS!




THIS CLEVER PUZZLER was the first release from Denki, formed by ex-DMA employees, including Gary. Behind its simple slide and stick gameplay, you'll discover a challenge that demands considerable lateral thinking. Trying to match up similarly coloured blocks requires strategic use of obstacles and much forward planning. Don't let the presentation fool you; this offers a stern test and you'll certainly be clicking on 'reset' frequently, having scuppered your chances of solving a screen by accidentally gluing together an awkward arrangement. Originally released on the GBA in 2001, versions for iOS and Facebook appeared last year.

play everything, let alone then write about it plus all the other things you had to do.

**RG: You and the other *Zzap!* writers came across as really passionate. Did you argue about what review scores to give?**
GP: Absolutely, especially in the early issues. Bob and Chris were very opinionated, too. Sometimes it'd be me and Julian against those two or you'd be on your own and it was a real test of how passionate you were about a game, how far you'd fight your corner.

**RG: Any memorable arguments?**
GP: Yeah, when we did the top 64 games. Julian really didn't like *Boulder Dash*. Chris and Bob were massive fans and I'd played it a lot, mainly due to the review they'd given it in *PCG*. I really liked it but felt I should side with Julian as we were a similar age and outlook, this youthful impetuousness against these old-school veterans. We were at loggerheads. I think in the end it did get the number one spot.

**RG: Speaking of arguments, you only awarded *Mama Llama* a measly 59%…**
GP: That was a funny one. I was into Jeff Minter's stuff, and I suppose by association I liked him, but none of us liked that game. It wasn't like anything else around at the time and we really did give it a good crack of the whip but we just couldn't get on with it. I've gone back since and I still can't.

**RG: Didn't it lead to handbags at dawn between Jeff and Chris?**
GP: Chris didn't help. He had a real issue with Jeff's column in the magazine. I really liked the idea of finding out more about the people behind the games and the process of how a game comes together. It was a really nice column but Chris felt it was becoming more like a Minter crusade and took exception to a few quips Jeff made. *Mama Llama* was the tipping point. I'm not sure if Chris took the huff and got rid of the column or Jeff took the huff and left. It was a shame, as I liked the idea of the authors being seen as stars.

**RG: Tell us what a typical day would be like on *Zzap!*.**
GP: We worked long hours, only really stopping to go to the pub and sleep. We'd get in early, mainly to play the games we were looking forward to. They were the worst to review because you got so into them that you didn't want to take time out to actually write about them. I remember *The Sentinel* was like that for me. You'd take stuff home, which you weren't supposed to, just to play it more. We got some things on disk but it was still mainly tapes. Thank God for turboload, which was just coming in then.

**RG: Would you squabble about who would get to review what?**
GP: Oh yeah, we were like a bunch of kids going [puts on toddler's voice]: 'Not fair, I want that one! I don't wanna doooo this one…' Ridiculous, really. It settled down when we moved to Ludlow just as we were starting on issue 4 and went under the Newsfield banner.

**RG: The move marked the departure of Chris Anderson, who set up Future Publishing…**
GP: Chris asked us if we wanted to stay with him or go up to Ludlow, and that was an interesting point. At the time, we were on such a high with how the magazine was turning out we were like, 'Yeah, let's go with this!' Chris was this older guy… well, he wasn't that old but he had a maturity and we were these feisty kids. Looking back, I've had these decision points in my career and have always veered away from the more successful one. I'm not sure what that says about me.

**RG: Did the move mark a big change in how the magazine was put together?**
GP: Newsfield had a different outlook. They'd had a lot of success with *Crash* and were keen to expand. It was a strange setup. Julian and I were left to get on with it by Roger Kean… well, he didn't quite leave two children in charge of the gun shop. He did steer it but he allowed the personalities to blossom.



> "At Zzap!, we worked long hours, only really stopping to go to the pub and sleep"



## RG: Were you a happy family at *Zzap!* Towers?

**GP: There were definitely ego clashes between Julian and I. We were working so closely together all day; you had a bizarre set of relationships – as intimate as a family, as feisty as a family, lots of bickering and arguing and lots of good times, which always outweighed the bad.**

**RG: Did you ever feel pressurised to give a game a particularly favourable write-up?**
GP: Absolutely. It wasn't commonplace, though. There was the very rare form of direct pressure. The indirect pressure wasn't always conscious. We'd get friendly with authors, publishers and PR people and sometimes those friendships would be tested. They wouldn't ask us directly because they knew we were independently minded and incredibly opinionated and they knew we wouldn't buckle, but I know sometimes there were intimations…

**RG: Did companies threaten to pull their advertising in the magazine if you didn't give their game a good review score?**
GP: Oh, that was a third way of putting pressure on. I'd forgotten about that! We'd get US Gold, Elite and Ocean, for example, threatening to pull their adverts. In fact, I think every publisher at some point either threatened to or actually did withdraw advertising because of a bad review.

**RG: Did your bosses ask you to give positive reviews to major advertisers, then?**
GP: No, they knew we had integrity. Understandably they were conscious of how it might affect revenue, so they would sometimes ask us to not be quite so aggressive.

**RG: And did you tone it down?**
GP: Oh, at that age I was far too petulant to take any notice. 'Fuck you, NO!' In fact, the more you tell me not to, the more I'm going to do it. I remember with the US Gold World

## *NUMBER CRUNCHING

**90:** The total number of issues of *Zzap!64* published from 1985 to 1992. The magazine was renamed *Commodore Force* and continued for another 16 issues, finally ceasing publication in March 1994

**27:** The number of issues of *Zzap!64* that Gary worked on before Ciaran Brennan took over as editor

**29:** The number of issues that Gary edited of *The One* before Mr Brennan again took over the reins

**3:** The number of months Gary spent as co-editor of *The Games Machine* before getting the boot from Newsfield

**96:** The highest percentage score given to a game reviewed in *The One* while Gary was editor, awarded to both *Kick Off 2* and *Lemmings*

**97:** The percentage score given to the all-time classic *Elite* in the first issue of *Zzap!64*

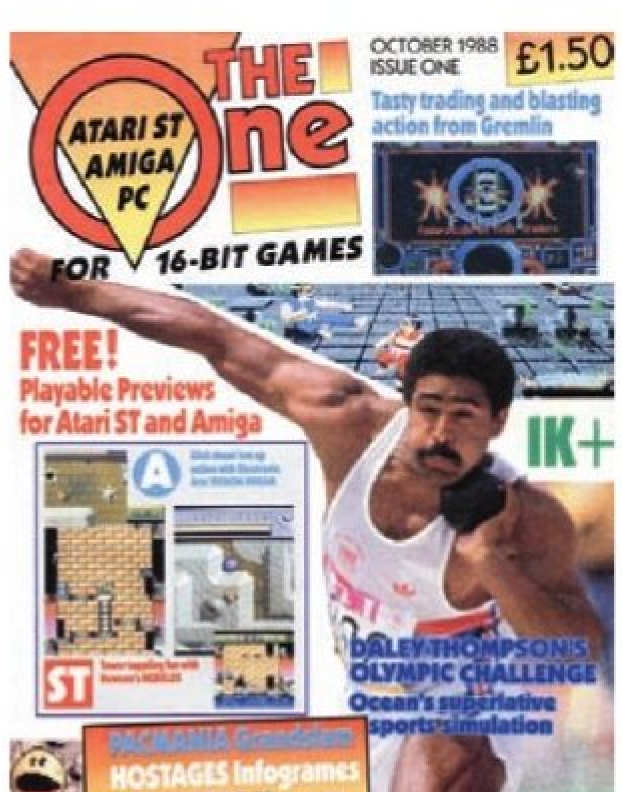
**2007:** The year when Gary was made a 'Media Legend' at the annual Games Media Awards ceremony

Cup game, we were so pissed off and angry because we felt we'd been pushed into a corner and we had to comply that we sort of lashed out and gave that game a kicking, more than it probably deserved. I just said the controls were crap, the box was crap, everything about it was crap apart from the free badge. We got into a lot of shit about that.

**RG: Despite that, you did go up the ranks of the magazine. Was it hard going from writer to editor?**

GP: I was enjoying the escalation. We started on £3,000 a year and we couldn't afford to pay rent and eat on that but you didn't care because you weren't doing it for the money. So the pay rise was nice, but you learn that the responsibility changes the relationship with your colleagues.

> "I've felt this vibe is back in the games industry, like in the old days, that anyone can do anything"




» As launch editor of *The One*, Gary championed the rising power of 16-bit machines as well as a more pictorial style of games magazine.

**RG: In what way?**

GP: Well, I hadn't expected to become such an arsehole. My good friend [*Zzap!* writer] Gary Liddon reminds me often. Once I came back from a show and found Gary and Julian had done fuck all in my absence and I knew I had to act with a degree of maturity, but you don't have the experience to back that up. I ended up being a complete prick about it.

**RG: You stayed until issue 27. Did *Zzap!* become the mag you wanted it to be?**

GP: Good question. I guess it did. We were bothered about integrity and were interested in making the artists the stars. I suppose there was a degree of micro-stardom in it for ourselves, too.

**RG: Did you give your successor, Ciaran Brennan, any advice?**

GP: I left in a huff. I think I'd just had enough and I wanted to do something else. I mean, *Zzap!* was still massively successful and rising in sales – nearly 100,000 at that point. I suppose everything was going so well that I got into a groove and got bored of the repetition. The problem with me is when things get too easy, I'll fuck it up! I don't think I actually resigned; I just stormed off to London and was stropping round there until Graeme Kidd called me and said they were launching *The Games Machine* and wanted my input on it. We did this fantastic launch magazine, really original, with stories about toys and games, but things were getting political at Newsfield. A few camps had formed. It came to a head and basically Graeme and I got sacked. Unfairly. Graeme was in the NUJ so claimed unfair dismissal but I wasn't, so I was out on my ear. It was messy.

**RG: You landed on your feet, though, by getting a job as assistant editor at seminal soft porn mag *Knave*. Was it a very hands-on role?**

GP: You're just looking at gash and breasts and buttocks all the time and you get desensitised to it really quickly. It becomes no big deal. The models would wander round being very frank. Half the staff are women anyway. I was editing the letters, and what you need to know is what we published was tame compared to what was sent in. They were horrible.

**RG: We thought you just made the letters up…**

GP: Everyone thinks that but people really did send in that filth. The handwriting was insane. Some beautifully written letters describing these vile acts. I remember this farmer sending in all these letters about him and his dog meeting these girls on country walks. Fucking disgusting…

**RG: Moving on, you returned to games in December 1987 at EMAP as deputy editor at *Commodore User*. Was that different to *Zzap!*?**

GP: It was dreadful. They wanted me to lift sales, which had fallen because it was so po-faced, I think, and then they wanted me to launch some new stuff. That was why I went, plus they were a big publisher, but Mike Pattenden, the editor, and I never really got on. There was a lot of friction. The staff writer was in a band and he didn't give a shit about anything else! Lovely guy but useless if you needed to depend on him. The whole place was just so much more regimented than at *Zzap!*, but what was weird was at Newsfield we had been using a lot of high-tech stuff like Apricot computers for typesetting, and I get to EMAP and they're using fucking typewriters.

**RG: Even so, it led to perhaps your greatest success as editor of *The One*.**

GP: We did a dummy issue and I thought it had the same kind of feel as early *Edge* magazine, which followed it years later. The initial brief was a high-class, multiformat magazine that covered all sorts of technology, but it kind of settled down to Amiga, ST and PC.




» [Amiga] Gary worked with David Braben on *Frontier*, his epic sequel to *Elite*.




» [iOS] Gary's latest project is *Scrabble*-meets-*Risk* mash-up *Quarrel*.




» [SNES] As a producer for Konami, Gary had a hand in this decent scrolling beat-'em-up, *Batman Returns*.

**RG: The 16-bits were on the rise by then. Was it very different to the 8-bit days?**
GP: I had loads of ideas of what to do and, as usual when you have loads of ideas, most are rubbish. I had this belief that the pictures would do the talking and we needed fewer words. I was really into Japanese mags at the time, which were pictorially led. I was moving away from that opinion thing. I suppose you try to do things that separate you from what you did before.

**RG: So from being synonymous with opinionated, personality-led writing, you move to the kind of magazines prevalent today, with loads of preview shots and any old guff to go with them.**
GP: Uh, yeah. We had this feature called 'Work In Progress', which sounds mundane now, but no one was doing it back then. I was trying to show how a game was put together using images that were of interest and value, like how sprites were created and how they were animated. They weren't just there for no reason. We were trying to show the process. And we did big game guides, with pictures stitched together to show you how to get replay value from your game. Our ambition was huge but the technology sort of let us down. Like, we couldn't afford to scan enough pictures, we could only have so many colour pages…

**RG: It sounds like you were pioneering features that would be staples for the next decade. We suppose that explains all the awards in 1989: Journalist of the Year, Magazine of the Year, Editorial Team of the Year…**
GP: We were really on a roll by that point, definitely industry favourites. The magazine only ever sold 30-odd thousand but our advertising manager said he'd be beating off advertisers with a shitty stick. We had to turn them down because there wasn't room in the mag. It was in profit after the first issue, mainly due to us working our fucking balls off.

**RG: And with this huge success you opt to walk off…**
GP: I had a real fucking strop and wrote this obnoxious letter to my publisher Terry Pratt, which basically spelt 'FUCK YOU' down the side. Incredibly petulant. I left on really bad terms. I think there's a pattern emerging here. And I'm at fault.

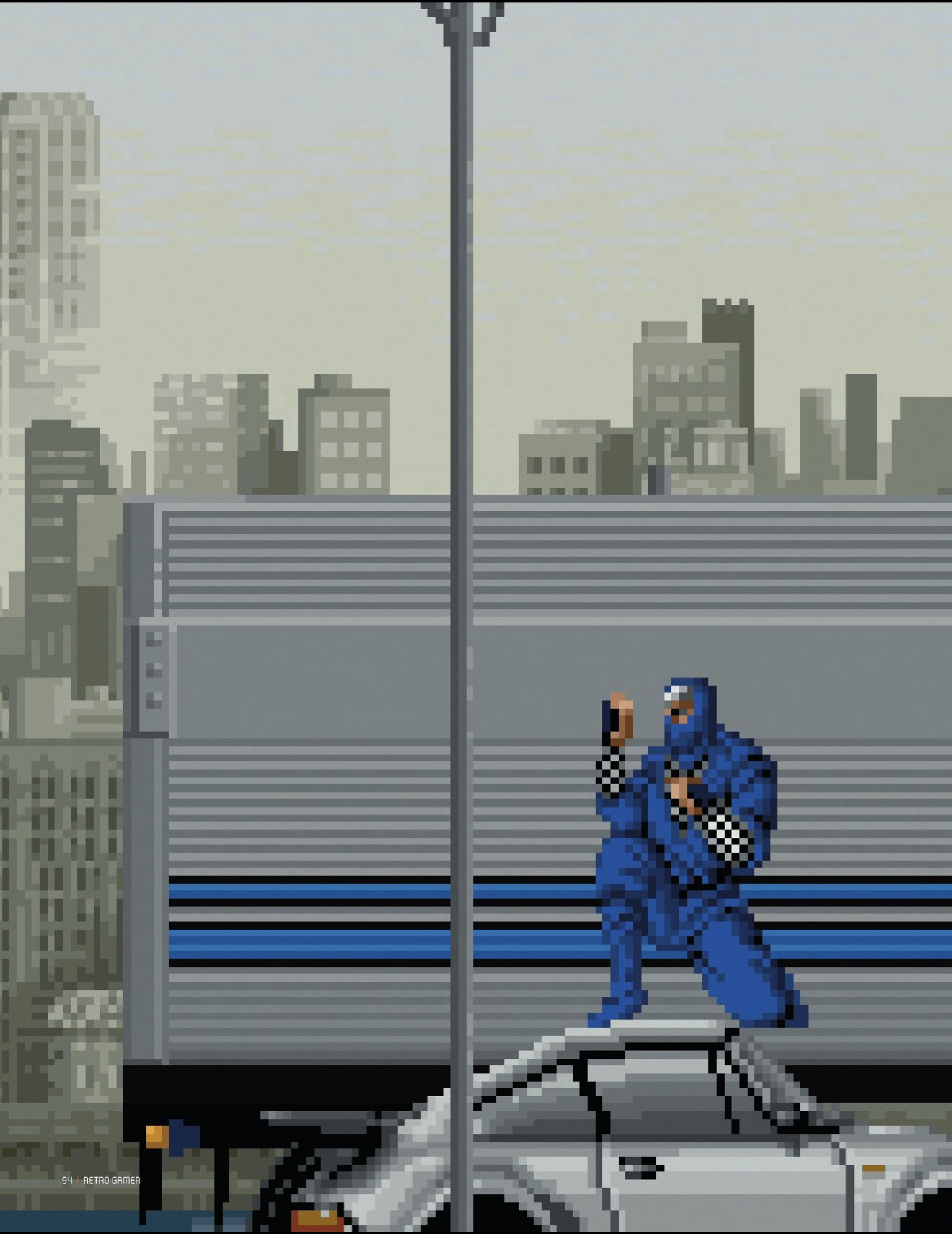
**RG: You still got work at Future Publishing, though.**
GP: Yeah, in an editorial consultancy role, working on the launch of *Amiga Power*, *Edge*, *PC Format*, *PC Gamer*, quite a few. I was also writing game manuals; *Cannon Fodder* and [*Thexder*] were mine. I did some production work for Konami, managing the *Batman Returns* team and working with David Braben on *Frontier*. But by 1995, I was going crazy from working at home for four years.

**RG: You then joined BMG Interactive, followed by a role at DMA, and one of your projects was *Race'N'Chase*. Didn't that become *Grand Theft Auto*?**
GP: The initial design was top-down cops and robbers. You picked your missions from a menu and some were fucking bollocks, like delivering pizza. The controls were appalling. A button to open the door and a button to close it, and I'm sure you had to close the door before it let you run off. The car handling was a joke and it crashed all over the place. Nothing was getting fixed so the testers couldn't test anything. Trying to get it stable was the main job. There's only so much you can do as a producer.

**RG: You left DMA/Rockstar in 2000, just before it had massive success with *Grand Theft Auto III*. We can see that pattern again…**
GP: Yeah, that's another one of those 'diversions'. If I'd stayed there, I'd be incredibly rich now, but I was getting tired of these big projects. I was becoming more interested in family, and my heart said it was probably best for everyone if I just left.

**RG: You joined Denki in 2000 and it's proved to be a lasting relationship. The last few years have seen you releasing games for iOS and even Facebook. Is that the future for you?**
GP: I don't know. These last four years have been a really interesting time. I've felt this vibe is back, like in the old days, that anyone can do anything. Accessibility to your audience, lots of middleware and free tools, less low-level stuff required, being able to play through touch… It's incredibly exciting. I wish I was younger!







# Bad Dudes Vs. Dragon Ninja

## PRESIDENT RONNIE NEEDS YOUR HELP!

RETROREVIVAL




» ARCADE
» DATA EAST
» 1988

**Apart from *that* Karnov cameo, the second stage of *Dragon Ninja* is what everyone remembers *Dragon Ninja* for, right? It's the one that takes place on a busy stretch of motorway and sees our two vest-wearing heroes battling ninjas on a large truck while more ninjas gradually pile into frame, many of which are standing on the roofs of some flashy sports cars.**

Well, as a kid, a combined love of Sega's *Shinobi* and this awesome stage made me an instant fan of *Bad Dudes Vs. Dragon Ninja*. However, a recent return to it to write this piece exposed it as not being good as I once remembered – though I will admit to being more easily pleased in my formative years; I was a content Amstrad owner after all.

The first thing that made me chuckle was its premise. When rampant ninja-related crimes engulf New York City, the situation comes to a humorous head when wonderfully named 'President Ronnie' is kidnapped and someone high up in the secret service enlists the help of two street fighters name Striker and Blade to rescue him. Save President Ronnie from some ninjas, then: this is about as deep as the mission objective gets.

A popular side-scrolling arcade brawler of the Eighties that was clearly heavily inspired by Sega's smash hit *Shinobi* – both games share similar aesthetics and feature the dual-plane mechanics that were doing the rounds at the time – a combination of its fashionable ninja theme, chunky visuals and what we're convinced is entirely accidental humour saw it become a popular addition to amusement arcades in its own right.

Set across several stages that took players fighting ninjas on a dangerous NY street, a busy freeway, a sewer system, an oriental garden, and finally the inside of a skyscraper (where, oddly, the last boss is keeping a helicopter on the top floor), *Bad Dudes* had all the typical beat-'em-up trappings: a wafer-thin plot, a small number of attacks, a small handful of weapons and a horde of similar mono-attack enemies and bosses to fight. But then, for me that was always its charm…well that and the freeway stage. *

# RETRORATED



>> Christmas is mere months away, and as a result games are no longer arriving in dribs and drabs. 3DS owners get Star Fox 64 3D and a new Galaga and Pac-Man compilation, while Driver makes a triumphant return

## PICKS OF THE MONTH



**DARRAN**
**Star Fox 64 3D**
It's not as spectacular as I was hoping for, but it remains an excellent shoot-'em-up.



**STUART**
**Driver: San Francisco**
The story is not as good as past games, but the driving itself remains excellent fun.



**DAVID**
**Star Fox 64 3D**
I've enjoyed revisiting *Star Fox 64*. It's just a shame the treatment is a little lacklustre.

# Star Fox 64 3D

### STAR FOX IS BACK! UNFORTUNATELY, SO IS SLIPPY

**INFORMATION**

- **FEATURED SYSTEM:** 3DS
- **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** NA
- **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- **PRICE:** £39.99
- **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
- **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- **PLAYERS:** 1-4

**BRIEF HISTORY**

» *Star Fox* was originally released for the Super Nintendo in 1993. Created in a collaboration between Nintendo and Argonaut Software, it was famed for its Super FX-fuelled graphics, which gave the SNES stunning 3D visuals. A superb update followed for the N64, but later games in the series didn't quite capture the same magic.

**WHY NOT TRY**

▼ SOMETHING OLD
**STAR FOX (SNES)**



▽ SOMETHING NEW
**STAR FOX COMMAND (DS)**





**If Grezzo and Nintendo's recent update of *The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Time* proved one thing, it was that 3D could easily breathe fresh new life into an old classic. Nintendo's second big update is now with us – after missing its promised July launch window – but while *Star Fox 64 3D* remains a truly excellent game, it falls a little short of the lavish treatment that *Ocarina Of Time 3D* received.**

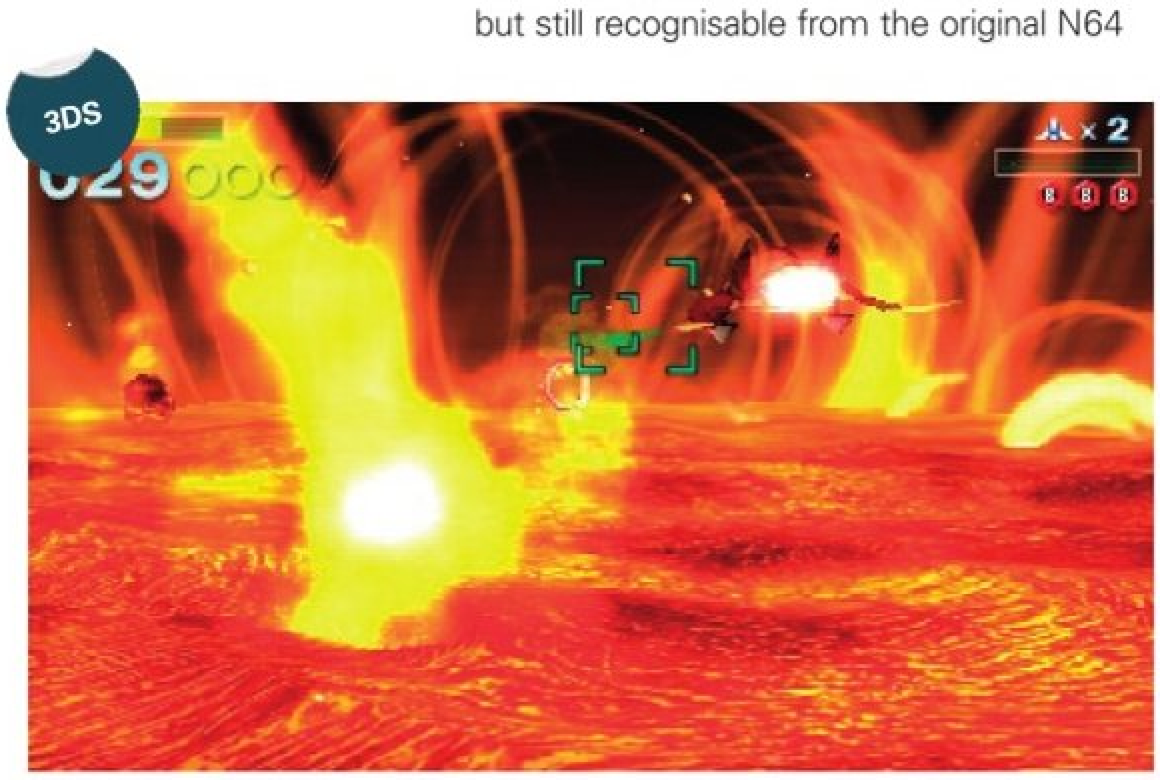
This, in part, is due to the use of 3D, which, if we're honest, can be a little underwhelming at times. Despite some pleasing use of depth on certain levels, the 3D never ever wows in the same way that it did with *Ocarina Of Time*. Maybe we're starting to get used to the effect now, but many areas of the game feel rather flat and lifeless. Sure, there are some truly stunning moments – enemies sneaking up on you from behind, the final hand-slapping assault against Andross – but these exciting moments don't appear with the same frequency as in *Zelda*. The 3D treatment in itself is rather strange, because the cinematic gameplay and many of the bosses you encounter seem built for the format. The effect is certainly solid, but never spectacular.

Fortunately, if the 3D disappoints at times the same can't be said for *Star Fox 64*'s glorious visuals. As with Grezzo's loving update of *Ocarina Of Time*, *Star Fox 64*'s aesthetics have been given a complete overhaul. While certain stages have some noticeable pop-up, for the most part *Star Fox*'s world has never looked better. Water effects are stunning, the enemies Fox and his team fight against are greatly detailed but still recognisable from the original N64 game, while *Star Fox*'s many bosses look truly superb. Audio is also excellent, with the stomping orchestral tunes still sounding magnificent. *Star Fox* also captured the bombast of old sci-fi space operas, and that's particularly effective here. In fact, the only downside to the audio is that many of the crew sound more annoying than ever, and it's no longer possible to switch over to the cute babbling that could be found in the original N64 game.

While *Star Fox 64* has been given a wonderful graphical overhaul, the game




» [3DS] *Star Fox*'s bosses remain astonishing to look at, it's just a pity so many of them are easy to beat.




» [3DS] The 3D effects in *Star Fox 64 3D* are good, but not as spectacular as we were hoping for.




» [3DS] Offering support to your three team-mates is as important as ever.




## ✱GO DEEPER

The facts behind Star Fox 64 3D

**>> The original *Star Fox* was a collaboration between both Nintendo and Jez San's Argonaut Software.**

**>> *Star Fox*'s only outing on the GameCube was by Rare. It's a highly underrated *Zelda* clone with amazing visuals.**

**>> *Star Fox 2* was completed for the SNES but never actually released. It's possible to play if you know where to find it.**

» [3DS] The multiplayer is a huge improvement over the original N64 game, but the lack of online play means it won't hold your attention for long.






» [3DS] Slippy remains annoying as ever, and this time you can't turn his whiney voice off.




» [3DS] The space battles remain spectacular and capture the essence of *Star Wars* beautifully.

itself is exactly as it was 14 years ago. Fortunately, this is a good thing, as it remains one of the best examples of its genre and is an excellent shoot-'em-up. The level design – with its clever swarms of enemies – and numerous buildings and structures that reward exploration still manage to impress, while the variety that is on offer is staggering. There are a huge number of different routes to discover in *Star Fox 64* and while the core game can be finished in around 45 minutes, the burning need to discover those hidden secrets ensures the replay value remains high. As with many shooters, *Star Fox* isn't about clearing the game as quickly as possible, but in discovering its hidden secrets. Indeed, while those who played it back in the day will have a distinct advantage, it's amazing how easy it is to forget key routes and how to unlock them.

Longevity is also assured thanks to the additional game modes that are included. The Battle mode is a greatly improved multiplayer system but, sadly, it's not playable online (which, like the ranking system, is a huge missed opportunity), though it does offer a number of options including Survival, Point Battle and Time Battle. It also uses the 3DS's camera to constantly update your reactions as you fight other players – a nice but far from essential touch. Then there is Score Attack mode, which enables you to replay any stage you've completed while playing the main game. While both of these additional modes are good fun, they are ruined somewhat by not being able to interact with others online. Sure, being able to play with three other players with only one cartridge is certainly a nice touch, but the lack of online play is something of an oversight on Nintendo's part.

Another thing we're not impressed with is the implementation of *Star Fox 64*'s gyro controls. In addition to being rather unwieldy to use, they also constantly knock out the 3D effect, which can cause disorientation and force you to play in 2D. Even then, they feel too floaty and foreign, and it won't be long before you find yourself returning solely to the good old analogue stick.

While there's no denying that *Star Fox 64 3D* is a truly excellent shooter, this conversion doesn't impress in the same way that *Ocarina Of Time* managed. Graphical improvements aside, most of the new content, while fun, doesn't really justify its high price tag – especially if you already own the N64 original.



## The man behind the fox

NINTENDO PICKED WISELY when it handed *Star Fox 64 3D*'s coding duties to Q-Games; its founder, Dylan Cuthbert, has strong ties with the franchise. After working on *Starglider*, *Starglider 2* and *X* at Argonaut Software, he was part of the team involved with creating *Starfox*. After seeing *Star Fox 2* through to completion (but not release due to Nintendo cancelling it in favour of *Starfox 64*) Cuthbert worked briefly for Sony, before founding Q-Games in 2001. In addition to creating *Bit Generations Digidrive*, Q-Games is also responsible for the lauded *PixelJunk* series and *Star Fox Command* for Nintendo's DS.



### OPINION

Shigeru Miyamoto has already said that if this game doesn't sell then he'll never make another *Star Fox* again. Which makes the quality of this remake irrelevent, quite frankly. We all now have a responsibility to rush out and buy *Star Fox 64 3D* just to preserve the future of the series. Have you bought yours yet? If not, you're now my sworn enemy.

**Ashley Day**



## In a nutshell

**Yes you can't argue with the quality of *Star Fox 64 3D*'s gameplay, but the conversion itself is pretty standard, lacking the wow factor and sparkle that *Ocarina Of Time 3D* posseses.**

>> Score **89%**

# Driver: San Francisco

## UBISOFT SHIFTS INTO A NEW GEAR

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** XBOX 360 » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** PS3, PC » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** £49.99 » **PUBLISHER:** UBISOFT
» **DEVELOPER:** UBISOFT REFLECTIONS » **PLAYERS:** 1-2 (2-8 ONLINE)




» [Xbox 360] The Shift mechanic, and the comical story used to support it, will prove divisive.




**Go into *Driver: San Francisco* expecting a full return to the original PSone values and you'll probably be disappointed. This is not *that* Driver; it's the franchise equivalent of when The Beatles released *Magical Mystery Tour* and started dressing like The Banana Splits: it's the series many of us love but dressed like a giant, furry, but very entertaining walrus.**

More a series reboot than a sequel, *Driver: SF* gives fans an altogether different experience, one with both pros and cons. Gone is the gritty feel of the early PS instalments, and, in some respects, the onus on skilled driving, thanks to a barmy new 'Shift' conceit that sees players switching into the minds and bodies of motorists around San Francisco. How is this supernatural power explained? Well, the hero, Tanner, is in a coma, and imagining it all from his hospital bed.



It's a supernatural power, introduced to remove the on-foot sections that weren't really working for the franchise. In practice though, it doesn't quite do that, as Tanner can complete a good portion of his missions by taking out criminals though insane, reckless, rubbish driving: basically shifting into a cars and then smashing into them head-on.

The silly story and shift mechanic thus work both for and against the gameplay. The exaggerated driving physics and wacky handling thankfully remain, the shift mechanic is both fun and inventively applied to missions (and really comes into its own in multiplayer), and even the absurdity of the story fades away eventually.

Ultimately, *Driver: San Francisco* is pure silly fun, but it's not really the back-to-basics classic *Driver* sequel that some fans may be expecting.

### OPINION




This is everything I wanted. The driving is fast and furious and handles well, while the multiplayer is inventive and great fun. Best of all though is the new Shift mechanic, which reminds me of the underrated *Wheelman*. An impressive and highly enjoyable reboot.

**Darran Jones**

>> Score **78%**




» [Xbox 360] In *Renegade Ops*, everything is small but spectacularly rendered.

# Renegade Ops

## HIGH-DEF EXPLOSIONS, OLD-SCHOOL FUN

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** XBOX LIVE ARCADE » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** PS3, PC » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW » **PRICE:** 1,200 POINTS (£10.60) » **PUBLISHER:** SEGA » **DEVELOPER:** AVALANCHE STUDIOS » **PLAYERS:** 1-4




**It's been a while since we've played a game as bold, brash and fun as *Renegade Ops*. Coming from the development team that unleashed the freeform madness of *Just Cause* upon the world, *Renegade Ops* captures all the classic elements of an old-school shooter, but adds plenty of new and interesting gameplay mechanics to make it feel like a breath of fresh air.**

This is most notable in the gorgeous graphics engine, which renders ravines, dusty plains and deep jungles with stunning clarity. The physics are also worth noting, as they not only allow for some truly over-the-top explosions and jumps, but also make the driving (which you do a lot of throughout the game) very convincing.

As a member of the Renegade Ops team, you must commander a heavily armoured jeep and race around the huge levels completing objectives,



attending to various side-missions and basically causing as much damage as possible to the evil organisation Inferno. The story is silly, in keeping with *Renegade Ops*' larger-than-life theme, but it's nevertheless fun and played out in delightful comic panels.

Gameplay-wise, there are four different jeeps to choose from, each with their own unique skill trees to develop. Additional vehicles can be found, and there's an excellent cooperative mode that caters for four players. While the game itself is rather short – nine levels of roughly 20 minutes each – the different vehicles, optional side-missions and online leaderboards ensure there is plenty of replay value.

*Renegade Ops* may be a new IP, but it's deeply rooted in old-school gaming sensibilities, and shouldn't be missed under any circumstances.

### OPINION




*Renegade Ops* is certainly up my street. The controls and action are solid, the presentation is superb and it's playable. It reminded me a bit of *Under Defeat* spliced with Konami's classic *Jackal*. It certainly gets two thumbs up from me – get it immediately.

**Stuart Hunt**

>> Score **89%**

# Pac-Man & Galaga Dimensions

## NAMCO ADDS 3D BUT FORGETS THE GAMEPLAY

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** 3DS » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** £39.99 » **PUBLISHER:** NAMCO » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE » **PLAYERS:** 1




***Pac-Man* and *Galaga* are two of Namco's most beloved franchises, so it's somewhat sad to see such a bland compilation built around them.** The biggest issue is the lack of available games on offer. In addition to the arcade versions of *Galaga* and *Pac-Man*, Namco has included *Galaga Legions*, the amazing *Pac-Man Championship Edition*, and rounds the package off with *Pac-Man Tilt* and *Galaga 3D Impact*. Oh, and an awful *Pac-Man* cartoon to celebrate his 30th birthday.

*Pac-Man Tilt* has a clever concept and sees you tilting your 3DS to manipulate the 2D levels that Pac-Man must race through. While an original enough idea, it's let down by stodgy controls and dull level design. Pac-Man can take an age to starting rolling and the bland design means that you'll often find him hitting objects, causing you to constantly tilt your machine to get him rolling again. *Galaga 3D Impact* is no better, and again uses the 3DS' gyro sensor to the game's detriment. An on-rails shooter, you move your 3DS around to pan the camera. Again, the idea is sound, but it's far too twitchy for its own good and you spend just as much time looking impotently at the back of your cockpit as you do attacking enemies.

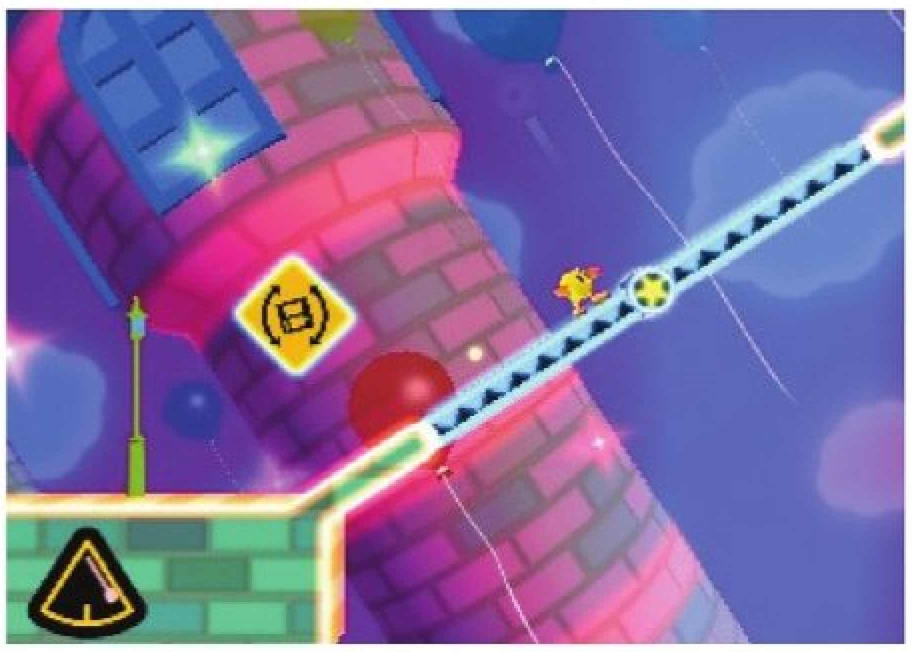
While the 3D effect of *Galaga* is convincing enough, it's let down because moving the screen constantly puts the image out of focus, meaning it's not long before the mother of all headaches sets in and you turn the 3D off. *Pac-Man Tilt* gets around this problem by not being in 3D, which is a little pointless, and smacks of it being a lazily ported DS game rather than a brand new title.

We like the subtle 3D treatment of the original arcade games, and there's no denying the quality of *Pac-Man Championship Edition*, but ultimately you're just not getting enough value for your £40. A very disappointing package.

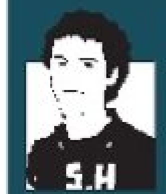
>> Score **61%**




» [3DS] The idea behind *Galaga 3D Impact* is a sound one, but iffy controls let it down.



### OPINION




Overall this is a pretty disappointing package. As well as oddly taking the decision not to put the most recent editions of *Dimensions* on the cart (we suspect they're likely being groomed for a future compilation), the new games feel more suited to the iOS format.

**Stuart Hunt**

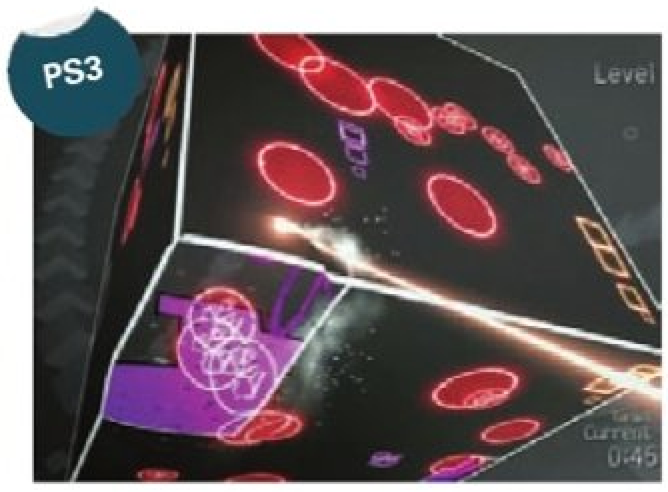



## Bounder's World

» **SYSTEM:** iOS (VERSION TESTED: 1.0)
» **PRICE:** £0.69/£2.99 IPAD » **PLAYERS:** 1-2

>> **We've been greatly** looking forward to Gremlin's first iOS entry. Unfortunately, it's disappointing. *Bounder's World* sees you bouncing across a continually scrolling set of rooftops using the accelerometer controls. While we understand the need to update *Bounder*'s gameplay, the twitchy controls, which can't be adjusted, and simple level design make for an amazingly frustrating experience.

>> Score **53%**

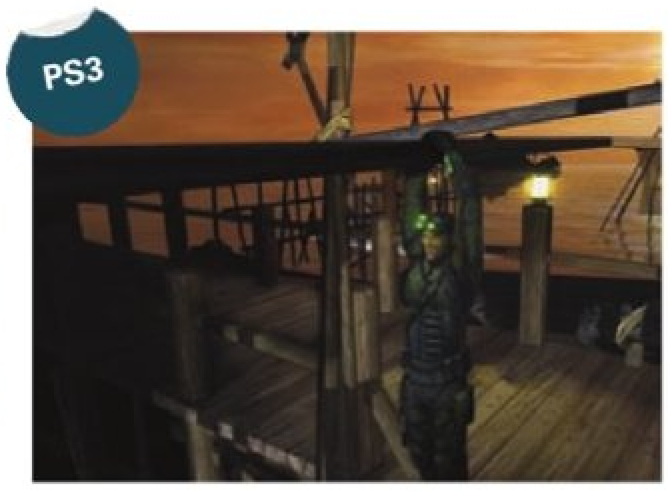



## Cubixx HD

» **SYSTEM:** PS3
» **PRICE:** £6.29 » **PLAYERS:** 1-7

>> **Coming across like** a steroids-injected version of *Qix*, *Cubixx HD* has you playing across all six sides of a cube instead of a single screen. Filled with fun power-ups, plenty of enjoyable gameplay modes, smart score mechanics and a pulsating soundtrack, *Cubixx HD* is a huge improvement over the original Minis release. The multiplayer can be messy at times, but it remains ridiculously addictive.

>> Score **86%**




## Splinter Cell Trilogy

» **SYSTEM:** PS3
» **PRICE:** £29.99 » **PLAYERS:** 1

>> ***Splinter Cell* is** the latest franchise to get given the high-definition treatment. It's a decent effort as well, as all three games remain enjoyable to play. Sadly, there are also numerous issues: frame rate problems, lengthy loading times and the complete removal of the superb multiplayer from *Pandora Tomorrow* and *Chaos Theory*, which means it's not the definitive package that it should have been.

>> Score **70%**




## Frogger Decades

» **SYSTEM:** iOS
» **PRICE:** £1.49 » **PLAYERS:** 1

>> **To celebrate *Frogger*'s** 30th birthday, Konami has released a brand new spin on their hit arcade game. While *Frogger Decades* looks cute, it hides a surprisingly tough game that can be truly frustrating in places (often due to the swipe control system). For the most part, though, *Frogger Decades* is a lot of fun with mechanics like double-jumps and catching flies all adding to the old-school charm.

>> Score **72%**

# RETROROUND-UP

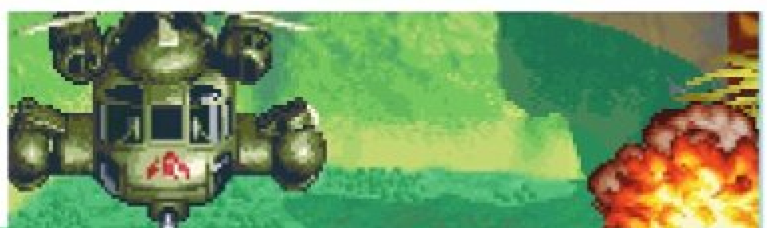


>> Every month we take a look at the latest classics that have been re-released for a new generation of gamers

## DOWNLOAD OF THE MONTH

# Shock Troopers

INFORMATION
» **System:** Neo Geo
» **Buy it for:** £7.99
» **Buy it from:** PSN
» **Score:** ★★★★★












**After standing neglected for far too long, SNK Playmore has decided to breathe fresh new life into its excellent Neo Geo Station.**

Its latest offering is the truly superb *Shock Troopers*, a stunning run-and-gun shooter that still manages to feel fresh and imaginative. Originally developed by Saurus in 1997, *Shock Troopers* plays like a fuel-injected version of *Mercs*, but upped the ante by delivering astonishing visuals, multiple routes and a number of interesting play mechanics.

By far the most interesting was the ability to switch between two distinct gameplay modes. Lone Wolf puts you in control of a single super soldier, while Team Battle lets you switch between three different characters from a multinational roster of eight, with hilarious names such as Big Mama, Southern Cross and Milky. As with many other games in the Neo Geo Station series, *Shock Troopers* features excellent emulation and beautiful presentation. A true classic that still plays brilliantly today.

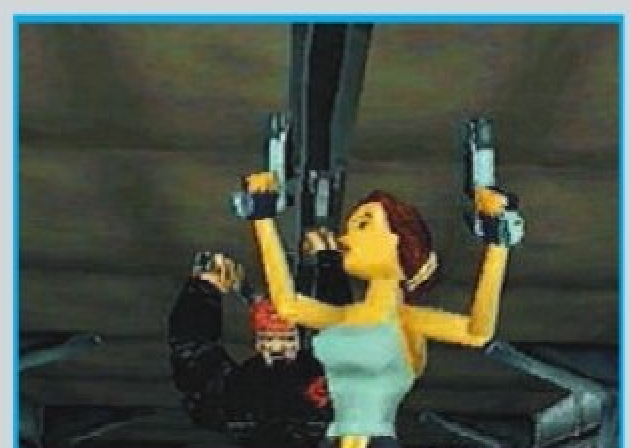
## >> OTHER HIGHLIGHTS



### Dungeon Keeper 2
» **System:** PC
» **Buy it for:** $5.99 (£3.72)
» **Buy it from:** GOG.com
» **Score:** ★★★★☆
» Bullfrog's enjoyable sequel to *Dungeon Keeper* remains a superb strategy game that hasn't dulled with age. The 3D visuals lack the pizzazz they once boasted, but the imaginative gameplay still holds up extremely well. There's also a level editor, so you can create your own dangerous dungeons once you've finished the lengthy campaign mode. We prefer the original, but the sequel is definitely worth downloading.




### Ultima series
» **System:** PC
» **Buy it for:** $5.99 (£3.72)
» **Buy it from:** GOG.com
» **Score:** ★★★★★
» Fans of Richard Garriott's digital universe will be pleased to hear that it's finally been released on Good Old Games. There are six games split across two packs, and while the earlier titles do look rather dated, there's no denying their playability. Fans will no doubt cherish this opportunity to return to Britannia, but even those new to the series will discover a genuinely engrossing set of games.



### Tomb Raider II
» **System:** PlayStation
» **Buy it for:** £4.79
» **Buy it from:** PSN
» **Score:** ★★★★☆
» *Tomb Raider II* was quite a change of pace from the original, swapping ancient tombs for more modern settings. Despite a number of key differences, including more focus on taking down human opponents, it's a highly enjoyable game that impressively builds upon Lara's original outing. She still handles like a truck at times, but the clever puzzles and satisfying combat will see you through to the end.



### Gargoyle's Quest
» **System:** Game Boy
» **Buy it for:** £3.60
» **Buy it from:** 3DS Virtual Console
» **Score:** ★★★★☆
» Even now, 21 years after its original release, *Gargoyle's Quest* is an insanely challenging game. As tough as the *Ghosts 'N Goblins* series from which it spawned, it's still enjoyable thanks to its well-designed levels, engaging protagonist and simple RPG elements that make it feel far grander than it actually is. The difficulty will infuriate some, but stick with it, because there's a great game underneath.

## ▼ VIRTUAL CONSOLE

This month we start highlighting the games available on Nintendo's Ambassador program. Expect the rest next month.

**Super Mario Bros**
» **System:** NES
» **Buy it for:** N/A
» **Buy it from:** 3DS Virtual Console
» **Score:** ★★★★★

**The Legend Of Zelda**
» **System:** NES
» **Buy it for:** N/A
» **Buy it from:** 3DS Virtual Console
» **Score:** ★★★★★

**Ice Climber**
» **System:** NES
» **Buy it for:** N/A
» **Buy it from:** 3DS Virtual Console
» **Score:** ★★★☆☆

**Balloon Fight**
» **System:** NES
» **Buy it for:** N/A
» **Buy it from:** 3DS Virtual Console
» **Score:** ★★★☆☆

**Donkey Kong Jr**
» **System:** NES
» **Buy it for:** N/A
» **Buy it from:** 3DS Virtual Console
» **Score:** ★★★★☆

## ▼ PC SERVICES

It's a somewhat mixed bag for PC owners this month, but it's bolstered by some strong offerings from Electronic Arts, including *Populous* and *Nox*.

**Wing Commander 1 + 2**
» **System:** PC
» **Buy it for:** $5.99 (£3.72)
» **Buy it from:** GOG.com
» **Score:** ★★★☆☆

**Populous**
» **System:** PC
» **Buy it for:** $5.99 (£3.72)
» **Buy it from:** GOG.com
» **Score:** ★★★★☆

**Nox**
» **System:** PC
» **Buy it for:** $5.99 (£3.72)
» **Buy it from:** GOG.com
» **Score:** ★★★☆☆

**The Sting**
» **System:** PC
» **Buy it for:** €4.99 (£4.30)
» **Buy it from:** DotEmu.com
» **Score:** ★★☆☆☆

**Constructor**
» **System:** PC
» **Buy it for:** €4.99 (£4.30)
» **Buy it from:** DotEmu.com
» **Score:** ★★★★☆

## ▼ PSN

SNK Playmore opens the floodgates on its Minis range.

**Altered Beast**
» **System:** Mega Drive
» **Buy it for:** £3.99
» **Buy it from:** PSN
» **Score:** ★★☆☆☆

**Athena**
» **System:** Arcade
» **Buy it for:** £1.99
» **Buy it from:** PSN
» **Score:** ★★★☆☆

**Guerrilla War**
» **System:** Arcade
» **Buy it for:** £1.99
» **Buy it from:** PSN
» **Score:** ★★☆☆☆

**Hal 21**
» **System:** Arcade
» **Buy it for:** £1.99
» **Buy it from:** PSN
» **Score:** ★★★☆☆

**Marvin's Maze**
» **System:** Arcade
» **Buy it for:** £1.99
» **Buy it from:** PSN
» **Score:** ★★☆☆☆

**Ozma Wars**
» **System:** Arcade
» **Buy it for:** £1.99
» **Buy it from:** PSN
» **Score:** ★★★☆☆

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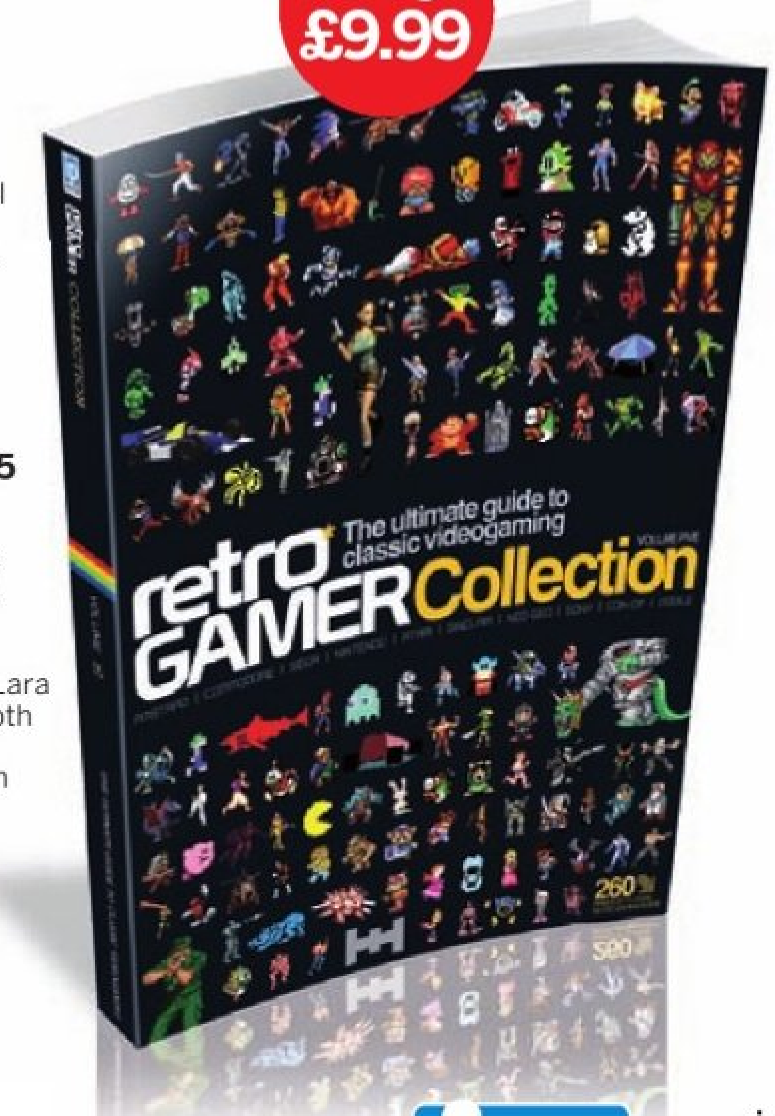


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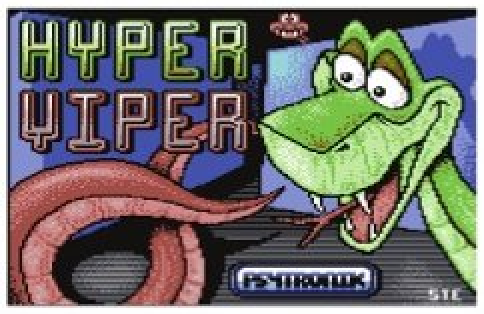
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# HOMEBREW

>> The scene's latest news and reviews



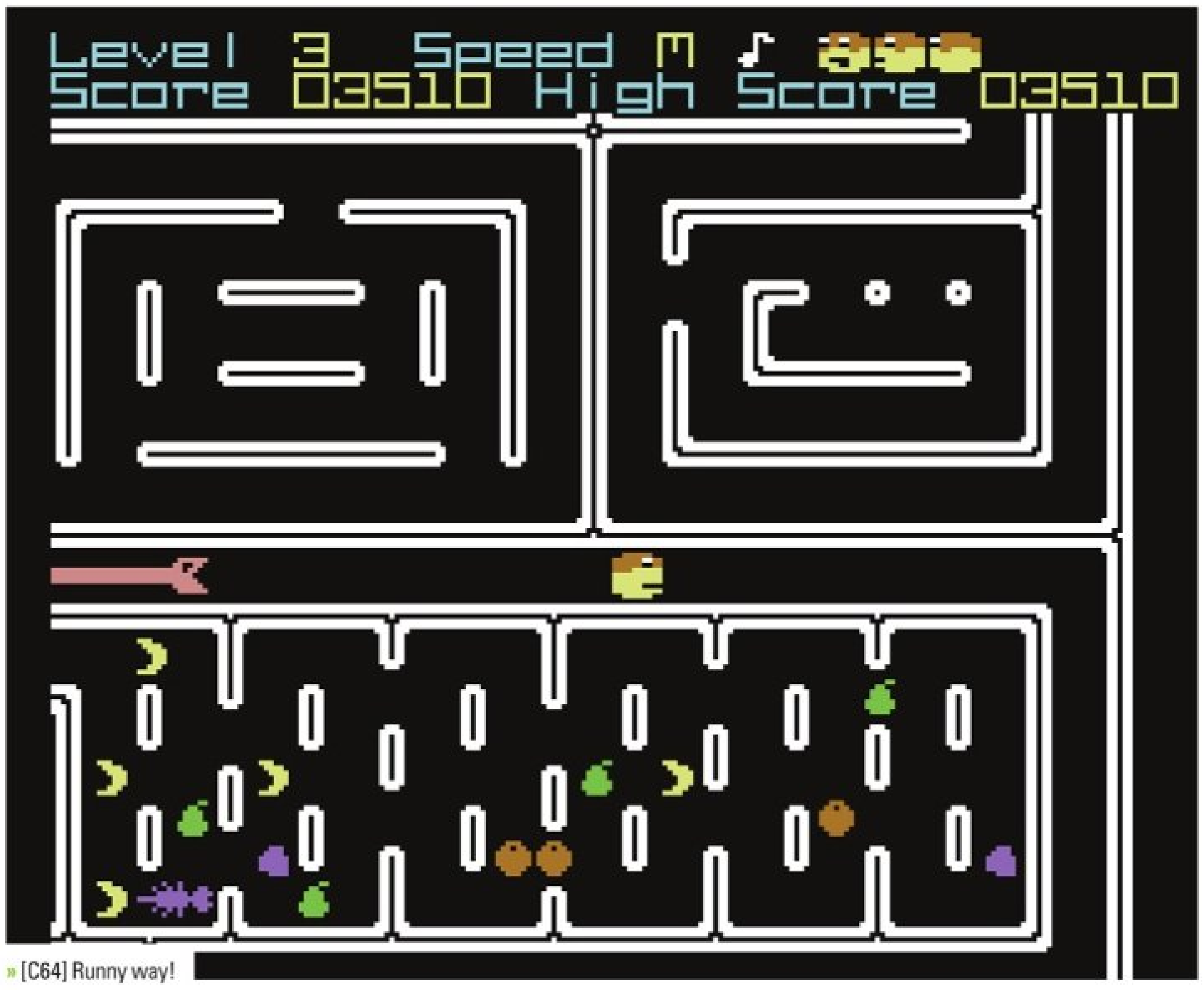

**I mentioned my C64 game Edge Grinder in the news a few issues ago because a group of programmers are collaborating to get it going as a multiplatform project. The first to be finished is the Amstrad CPC version by Paul Kooistra, and it's excellent! I won't review it since I was involved in its creation, but maybe we'll run a making of in a later issue**



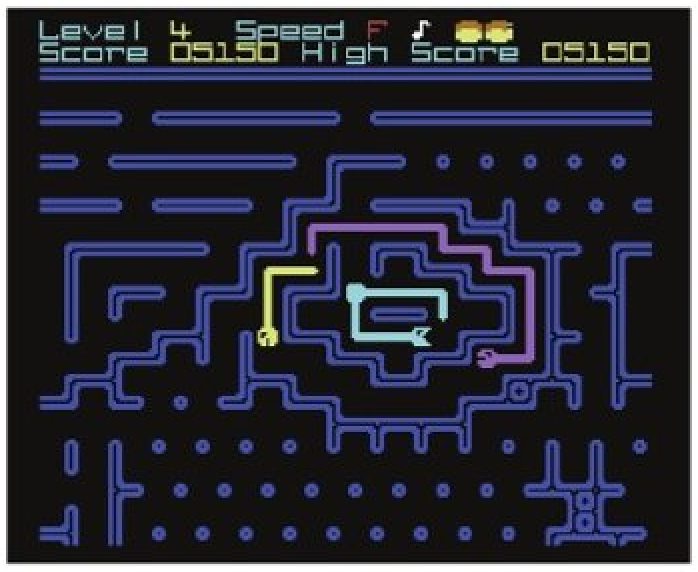

» **FORMAT:** C64
» **DEVELOPED BY:** JAMIE HOWARD
» **LINK:** KIKSTART.EU/HYPERVIPER-C64
» **RELEASE DATE:** 2011
» **PRICE:** £3.99 (TAPE), £4.99 (DISK), £9.99 (PREMIUM DISK) OR £1.99 (DOWNLOAD)

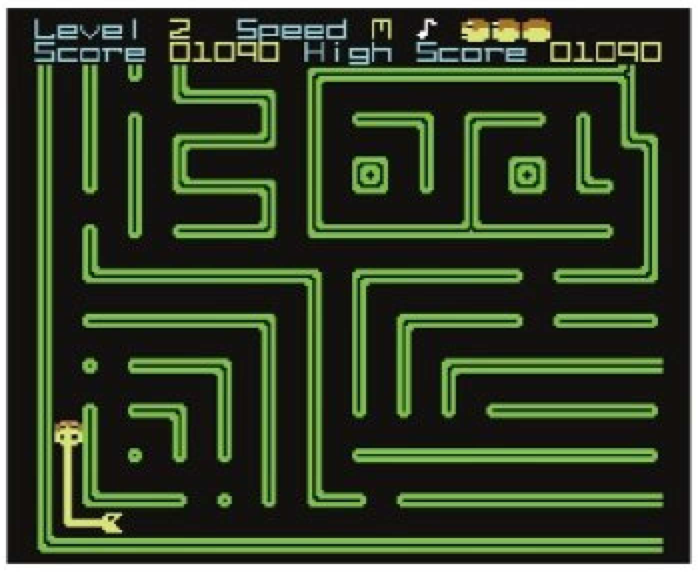
# HYPERVIPER

RATED ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 100




» [C64] Runny way!



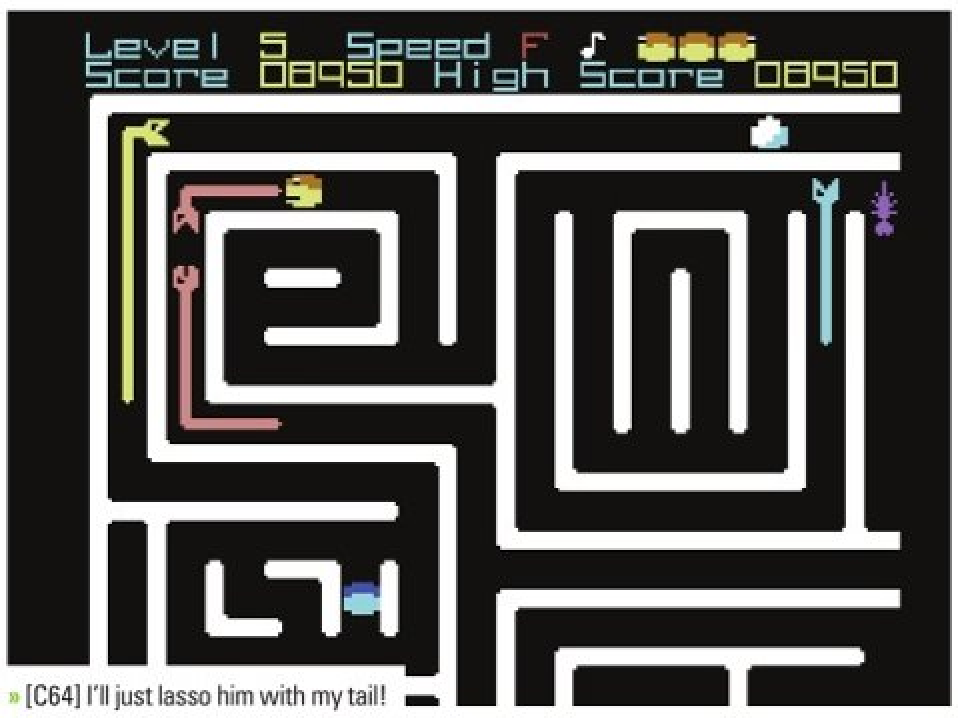

**As a child, Jamie Howard used to play *HyperViper* on the MSX, where a scrolling maze is infested with snakes, which the player's avatar, looking vaguely like the decapitated head of a ninja turtle, can remove by eating. Of course, feasting on snakes isn't the easiest thing to do due to the heads having pointy, venomous bits, so these particular serpents must be consumed from the tail end forwards, because attempting to nibble a chunk from the middle causes them to split into two. There are also ant-like creatures roaming the maze, leaving fruit and eggs in their wake; the former are tasty treats, which, if the entire set is collected, translate into an extra life, and the latter are harmless right up until they hatch into evil blue ninja turtle head clones that roam the maze.**

A worryingly quick quarter of a century soon passed and Jamie became an adult, settling down into a job within the IT industry. But during 2010 his love of the C64 led to him learning 6502 machine code in order to program for it, and the game he played as a kid seemed to be the perfect first project. So Steve Wallis, the programmer of the 1984 original on the MSX, was contacted in order to make sure this new C64 release wouldn't be an issue, and Jamie even went as far as negotiating with the publishers holding the rights to indie band Grandaddy's song *A.M. 180* – recognisable as part of the soundtrack to the movie *28 Days Later* for some and the title sequence of *Charlie Brooker's Screenwipe* on BBC Four to others – to get permission to use it within his game.

The results are pretty impressive. The spot effects may be rather sparse during play, but that converted music is handled reasonably well, and the MSX graphics have been converted without much re-imagining. The controls do lag occasionally and the scrolling is noticeably rough, in part because of the original game's MSX heritage – the C64's reputation for silky smooth scrolling also means it stands out among its peers – but there are also a few issues with colour lagging behind the background graphics. But despite these flaws, *HyperViper* was a brave project and is pretty substantial for a first effort. The screenshots probably make it look like a *Nibbly*-style game, but the programming required for the snake movement is significantly more complicated since they need to reverse away from obstacles.

One particularly clever feature that extends the longevity of *HyperViper* is the custom game mode. On the off chance that the included stages and three play speeds fail to offer a challenge, players can enter codes containing four characters, which are then used to generate levels, and if a gamer randomly wandering through the 65,500 possible combinations should find anything really challenging or enjoyable they can make a note of it for later, or perhaps pass that code on to other players to try.

**76%**




» [C64] I'll just lasso him with my tail!




» [C64] Feeling the need to go shopping?

## NEW GAMES NEEDED

If you have a homebrew project you would like to see featured then please contact us at:
**retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk**

# BELL HOPPER

» **FORMAT:** ATARI 2600 » **DEVELOPER:** TJOPPEN
» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/BELL-HOPPER » **PRICE:** FREE



» [Atari 2600] Bunny bunny, gabber gabber.

**Based on the** delightful Flash game *Winterbells*, the player-assisted bunny in *Bell Hopper* wants to climb as high as possible by jumping between bells as they drift down from above. Control is either by paddle or joystick, both of which move a white pixel below the play area that the bunny will move towards, and points are awarded for each bell touched, while hitting the birds doubles the current score.

And that's it because, like many good Atari 2600 games, *Bell Hopper* is extremely simple but still hideously addictive. The cute little rabbit is well animated as he either hops around on the ground or gracefully leaps from bell to bell, and it doesn't take long to get used to the 'follow the pixel' control system. *Bell Hopper* is even child-friendly because if bunny misses a bell he'll drop back to earth unharmed and sit there waiting for the next ascent to start.

**83%**

# WUNDERCHAR$

» **FORMAT:** SINCLAIR SPECTRUM » **DEVELOPER:** DAVE HUGHES
» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/WUNDERCHAR » **PRICE:** FREE

**Moebius, the star** of Dave Hughes' *Stamp Quest*, which we looked at in issue 87, has returned with another collecting-oriented mission; this time he's gathering up escaped User Defined Graphics and feeding them to his Spectrum. Moebius can catch three falling UDGs to ferry to the computer on the ground and, once they've been dropped off, he'll need to recharge via the 'replenopad', before flying off to collect more. Missed UDGs smash into the ground, with a finite number of breakages allowed before the game ends, and there are various energy-draining creatures to avoid.

*Wunderchar$* suffers a little from its long levels, and there are some visibility issues in particular on the stages where huge raindrops tumble down the screen, but it still manages to be charming, with its 48K beeper sound and eccentric collectables. And getting so many distinct objects out of 64 pixels is pretty impressive.

**70%**

» [Spectrum] Avoiding Comic Sans like the plague.






» [ColecoVision] Eat my Reeboks, freak face.

# WAY OF THE EXPLODING FOOT

» **FORMAT:** COLECOVISION » **DEVELOPER:** COLLECTORVISION
» **DOWNLOAD:** COLLECTORVISION.COM » **PRICE:** TBA

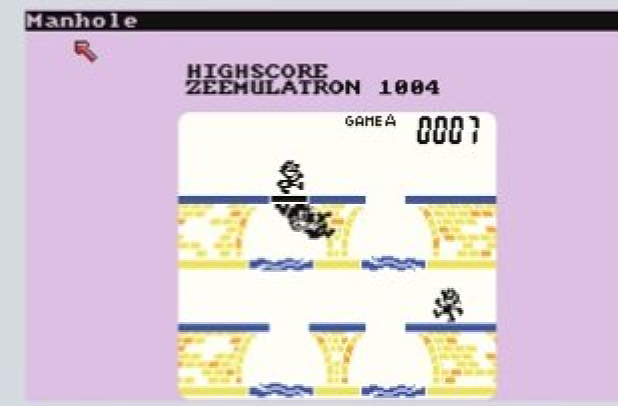
**The name borrows** from *The Way Of The Exploding Fist*, but this game has as much in common with *International Karate* as it does with Melbourne House's classic fighting game. *Exploding Foot* can be attacked by one or two humans, and there are two modes of play: the default Zen setting sees two fighters squaring off, with every hit flooring the opponent and two victories winning the current match; while the Street Fight option gives each player an energy bar and invites them to wade in and knock the pixels out of each other.

Fighting games are pretty rare in homebrew circles and this is the first of its kind for the ColecoVision. The player sprites are a little smaller than we've come to expect, but the game itself is reasonable, with fast and furious action, particularly in the Street Fight mode at turbo speed. Coleco collectors who like a punch-up can expect *Exploding Foot* to be released on cartridge by the end of the year, with all the latest news on it available on CollectorVision's website.

**71%**

## WHAT'S BREWING?

All the latest news from the homebrew community



» [Amiga] Council budget cuts are getting serious.

### >> Let's make a new start

*Manhole* is an Amiga conversion of Nintendo's Game & Watch game where a beleaguered man with a manhole cover must dash between four holes to prevent the innocent, if rather dim-witted, members of the public from falling in and subsequently putting in a claim against the council. According to the documentation, it runs on any machine with 512K or upwards, so grab it at **kikstart.eu/manhole**.



» [C64] Where did I put that magnifying glass?

### >> He left his footprints by the garden tree

*The Marlo Files* is a compilation of two recently released text adventures for the C64, both by Richard J Derocher. The interface has been designed to remove some of the more repetitive typing, and both games revolve around cases taken on by titular private detective Sammy Marlo. All investigators wanting more information should peer behind **kikstart.eu/marlo-files**.



» [Master System] Can you dig it?

### >> Get down deeper and down

MOO Milk Co is having problems with its subterranean distribution system and only Digger Chan can tunnel down to restore the service. *Digger Chan* appears to be a mixture of *Mr Driller* and a 'match three' puzzle game variant and is a new release for the Sega Master System, currently available to buy on cartridge, so tunnel over to **www.diggerchan.co.uk** for more.

# HOMEBREW

>> The scene's latest news and reviews

## WHAT'SBREWING?

All the latest news from the homebrew community

### >> Very silly indeed

The 50th Klik of the Month Klub was held recently. Hosted by Glorious Trainwrecks, a website that celebrates the Nineties postcardware attitude of chucking "random crap into your game and keeping whatever sticks", this competition is held once a month and encourages the churning out of simple, amusing and most likely completely barking games as quickly as humanly possible. They might not always be brilliant, but there is always something interesting. Why not take a look at **kikstart.eu/klik-50**?




### >> Game jam doesn't sound very tasty

Another competition has recently finished, this time held by the GameMaker Community, and it resulted in over 50 games being released, covering a wide range of genres. The winner was a platform game set on the designer's desk, where his hand appears to draw in the landscape for the player's character as the screen scrolls by. The results and links to all of the entries are available for your enjoyment behind **kikstart.eu/gmc-jam-2011**.

## FLASH BOREDOM

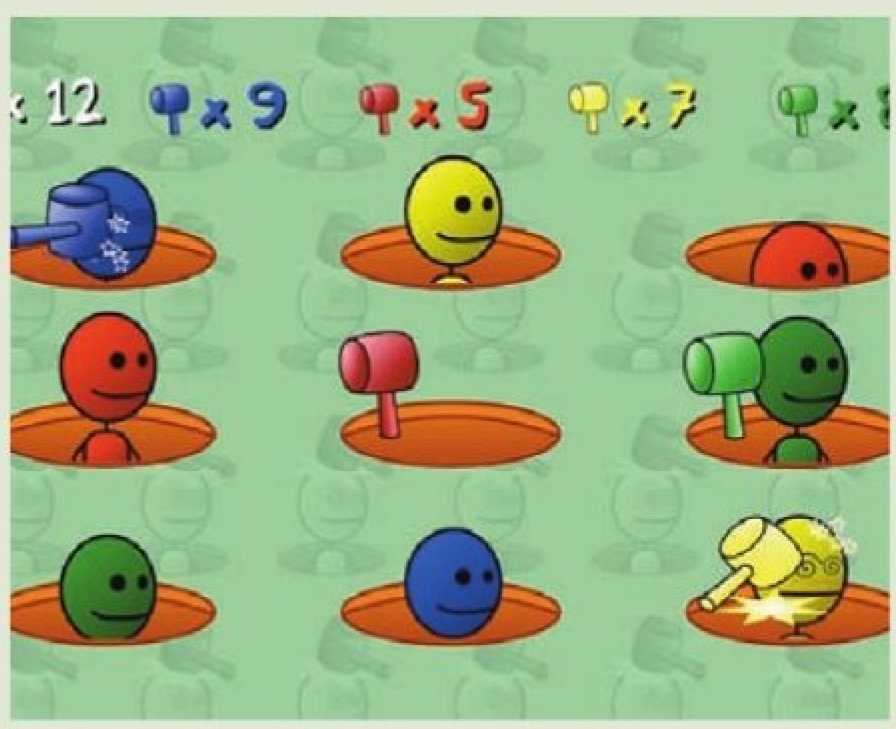


Want to know how to while away those boring office hours? Then don't miss out on **Retro Gamer**'s Flash game of the month. This month we look at **Wonderputt**.

TAKING THE 'MINI' in minigolf quite literally, *Wonderputt* squeezes 18 holes with obstacles into a single, tightly packed isometric screen. Players are challenged to get around in as few shots as possible and after that can play again while collecting small pieces of rainbow dotted around the greens. **kikstart.eu/wonderputt**

## OTHER GAMES WE'VE BEEN PLAYING...




## NENE MINIGAMES

» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/NENE-MINIGAMES

**Nene is a** cheerful young lad with a large, smiling face who is just days away from celebrating his birthday and about to be introduced to mini-games by his school friend Nini. One to four players can compete in these games, which include a colour-coded variant of *Whac-A-Mole*, counting instances of a particular shape on a field of moving objects, reaction tests where the correct button has to be pressed within a time limit, the classic game where an object is placed under one of several shuffled cups, or quickly spotting a face within a crowd. Winning a game earns points and will make it harder on the next try, while losing takes away a life.

Nene's world does become slightly darker on occasion – for example when Nini explains about how losing lives leads to death – so adults considering a 240 Microsoft Point purchase to amuse younger children might want to play through the demo first to make sure it's suitable. Fans of family-oriented party games out there should also play the demo. It isn't a direct clone of titles like *Mario Party* or the *WarioWare* series, but should still be fun when a small crowd of players are huddled around an Xbox 360 and all of the mini-games have been unlocked.

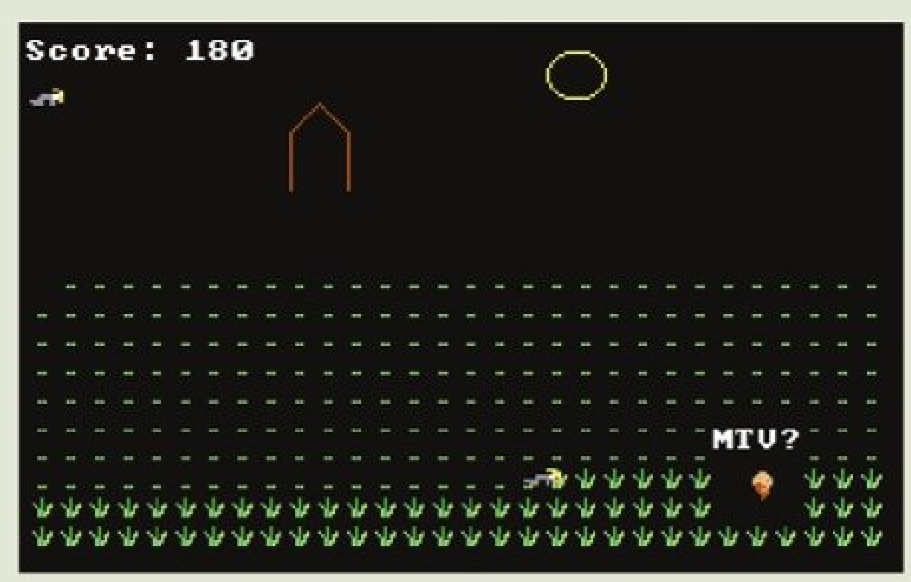


## ATTANCK!

» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/ATTANCK

**Anyone who has** played Namco's *Assault* will find *Attanck!* familiar. The player's tank is fixed at the bottom of the screen pointing upwards, and the play area, which is all represented as old-school tractor-fed printer paper with ASCII objects drawn onto it, rotates around it. The analogue sticks handle a tank track each, right shoulder shoots a bullet forward, and holding both sticks away from each other fires the grenade launcher.

It's a shame this slightly cheap and cheerful approach was taken to the in-game graphics because a beefed-up version of *Assault* with a little more variety would have been great, but *Attanck!* is still a reasonable and fairly tough shoot-'em-up.




## LADY PRIEST LAWNMOWER

» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/LADY-PRIEST

**There are bound** to be fans of *Advanced Lawnmower Simulator* on the Spectrum reading now, and they can rejoice, because John Szczepaniak's *Lady Priest Lawnmower* is a faithful remake of that esteemed type-in, with a little extra storyline featuring a kidnapped woman of the cloth for good measure. The S key starts the priestess up and M will persuade her to mow the grass and indeed anything else in her way.

Apart from the rough sample quality, Szczepaniak's 'singing' is a little reminiscent of Mel Croucher during his odder moments, and the weirdness of the original and the magazine that published it has been continued – although we're unsure if we're missing a point somewhere along the line…



» [Atari 8-bit] Welcome to the Fantasy Zone.



# HOMEBREW HEROES

Chris 'Sheddy' Hutt has been a man on a mission for the best part of a decade, writing and then rewriting his Atari 8-bit port of Space Harrier. Since it's just been released, he had some free time on his hands for a quick chat with us

Q&A

**Retro Gamer: What got you into making games?**
**Chris Hutt:** After seeing early videogames, the idea of how to make a computer do those things became fascinating to me. It wasn't so hard to get into, as the early home computers were promoted as being educational, having BASIC built in, and magazines and books had lots about learning simple programming.

**RG: What drew you to the Atari 8-bit?**
**CH:** At school I'd seen some early reviews of them in magazines, which hinted at them having some exotic hardware in them. This sounded like a really exciting prospect, given how much my brothers and I loved going to seaside arcades – I'd saved up for a VCS, but the computers promised even better, with some nice conversions of late Seventies and early Eighties arcade games. Fantastic games like *Star Raiders* were often left running in one of our high street electronics shops to lure in kids to part with their cash, or pester their parents for.

**RG: What have you found to be the most enjoyable and difficult parts of developing a game?**
**CH:** For me it would be the bittersweet process of turning some fairly tricky idea or feature into real code, the pain of debugging it and then the thrill of seeing it actually working. The arcade machine specs are vastly superior to the Atari's, so probably the most difficult thing was deciding on how to make the necessary compromises.

**RG: Did porting *Space Harrier* feel daunting when you started on it?**
**CH:** I didn't start off thinking I could make the whole game – I'd probably have given up pretty soon if that had been the original goal. It started as a learning exercise – just some routines for drawing big sprites and moving them around the screen. I added more and more things from the game as I was learning, and eventually the goal shifted to making the first level. After that it got shelved as I got fed up with it and the obsolete machine. It always niggled me that I'd never gone further with it, though. When I picked it up again many years later, I came back to it fresh and with a better idea of where to start over.

## HIGH FIVE

The classic games that Chris can't live without

**1 Crownland (Atari XL/XE)** A much-needed more modern platformer that works to the Atari 8-bit's strengths.

**2 Yoomp! (Atari XL/XE)** Fantastic example of turning a great demo effect into a playable game.

**3 Thrust (Atari VCS)** Amazing coding to somehow get this game onto the VCS.

**4 Bomb Jake (Atari XL/XE)** A *Bomb Jack* clone with exceptional attention to detail.

**5 Castle Crisis (Atari XL/XE/5200)** Amazingly accurate *Warlords* clone, pushing the hardware cleverly. Fantastic multiplayer fun.

**RG: Now you've released *Space Harrier*, what are you planning on doing next?**
**CH:** I have a few ideas I want to play around with on the 8-bit Atari, but I've no big projects in mind; *Space Harrier* was a once in a lifetime thing, and I don't expect to be trying anything else on that scale any time soon. I regret the early announcement of *Space Harrier* – things dragging on probably led to overexposure and unrealistic expectations. In 2003, I was convinced it would be finished in under a year, so I'll be trying hard not to shoot my mouth off too soon about anything I may get up to…

**RG: Who would you say are your programming heroes?**
**CH:** A few names spring to mind, but sadly individuals stand out less these days: Eugene Jarvis, as *Defender* and *Robotron* are just total masterpieces; David Crane, especially his Atari VCS and early Activision stuff; Archer MacLean for *Dropzone* and *IK*; Paul Woakes as *Encounter* and *Mercenary* really pushed Atari 8-bit hardware; John Carmack, id's 3D engine guru; and Nintendo's Shigeru Miyamoto – such playable games, though I doubt he does much coding any more.

**RG: Finally, what advice can you give to anybody wanting to become involved in homebrew development?**
**CH:** Older machines are great fun, as the hardware is simple enough, and projects small enough, to be handled by one or two people. You can take advantage of powerful emulators, cross assemblers and compilers that make developing and debugging much quicker and easier than back in the day.

# MAILBAG

**HAVE YOUR SAY…** SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – **WWW.RETROGAMER.NET**

## STAR LETTER

### TENNIS ELBOW

**Dear Retro Gamer,**

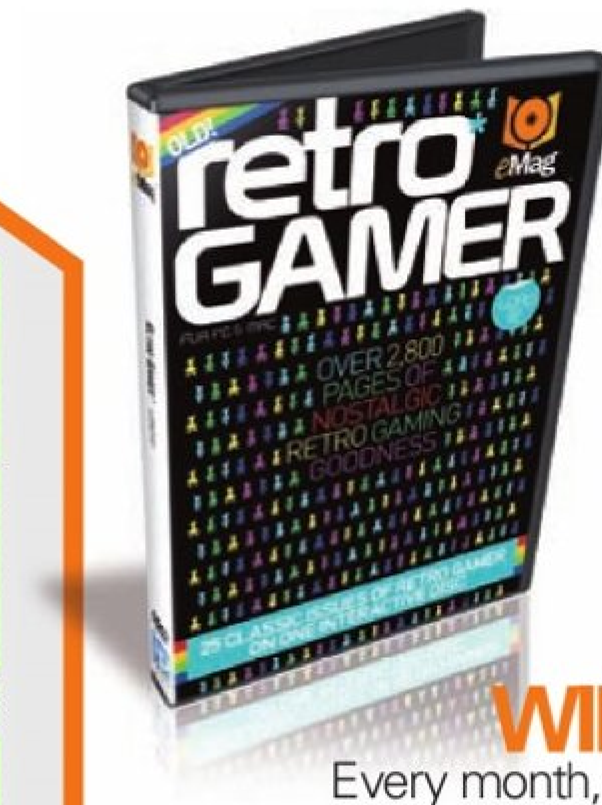
Would you ever consider running an article about the history of tennis games in the near future? I'm a big fan of the sport and have been enjoying videogame versions of it since the arrival of *Pong* in the arcades. It might not seem like it, but the sport has evolved massively over the years – particularly during the 8-bit and 16-bit periods – so it would be fascinating to learn more information about how they've become more realistic with time. The only thing I ask is that you declare *Super Tennis* on the SNES to be the best ever translation of the sport.

Kindest regards,

Garry King

**It's a very interesting idea, Garry. While we do not have any plans to run any sports-themed features just yet, we will certainly place it in the 'to consider' pile. And you're right. *Super Tennis* is ace.**




**WIN!**

Every month, one lucky reader will receive a copy of our latest eMag, **Retro Gamer Load 2**, a bargain if ever there was one. All you have to do is present a lucid, thought-provoking piece of literature that melts our souls. Failing that, something funny with swear words, or something *Strider*-related will go down just as well…

### NOT FEELING RADIANT

**Dear Darran,**

I've never been the sort of gamer to pay £200 for a single game, so I was pleased to learn of a re-release of *Radiant Silvergun*, as it would mean I would get to play something ace I always felt I'd missed out on. However, having downloaded and played it, I'm struggling to see what all the fuss is about. I mean, mechanically it's sound and all, but I just can't find the spark that elevates it above all the other Cave/Treasure-type shooters. It's just a very standard shooter. I'm really surprised, because critics and collectors, **Retro Gamer** included, go on and on about it, and before I played it I really expected to love it. So I guess my question is… what's the deal with all the love for *Radiant Silvergun*?

Cheers,

Barry Stenk, by email

**Thanks for sharing your thoughts with us, Barry. The reason why we rate *Radiant Silvergun* so highly is because it remains, even now, some 13 years after its original release, one of the greatest, if not the greatest, examples of the genre.**

**Masterfully designed and approachable in a number of ways, it's a benchmark shooter that is still without equal. Hopefully, its new Xbox Live Arcade release will introduce it to a brand new generation of gamers, who will love it as much as we do.**

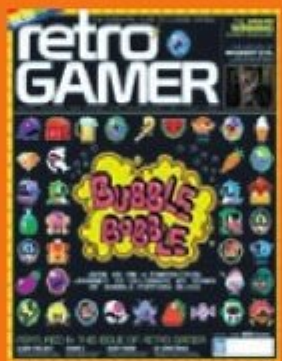





### TRS-80 MEMORIES

**Dear Retro Gamer,**

I remember back in the good old days, my father had driven up the driveway in his classic Chevrolet Bel Air, surprising us all when he came in with this wonderful new piece of equipment he'd paid $2,500 for. He called it a "real steal" and promptly laid down a big box on the table with the words 'Tandy TRS-80 Model III' emblazoned on the side. Needless to say we were all gobsmacked at the beauty of this incredibly futuristic-looking piece of equipment, as it was slowly unwrapped and then assembled. The thoughts of the potential of the games this machine could produce were practically overwhelming. Anyway, I knew my future lay in computers and indeed the pinnacle of Radio Shack's efforts, the Model III, complete with 48K expansion module. I even made a promise to myself that I would not just play games like *Formula 1* and *Hangman* well into the early hours every single day for months on end but actually master the computer – read the manuals, learn everything about the language, utilise every peripheral thoroughly.



## CONTACT US

**Snail Mail:** Retro Gamer, Imagine Publishing, Richmond House, 33 Richmond Hill, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH2 6EZ

**Email:** retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk



## >> YOUTUBE UPDATE

DARRAN'S BEEN BITTEN by the Atari Lynx bug again recently and has once again started tracking down boxed games for his collections. A number of the games he is still looking for are currently up on the channel in the usual place at **www.youtube.com/user/RetroGamerDaz**

Those glory days are, of course, behind me, but I was just wondering, will you ever cover such classic systems as the TRS-80 and games like *Formula 1* and other forgotten gems? I'm sure there are many other readers out there who have such systems as the TRS and Archimedes and so forth who would just love to read a special on them.

Awaiting in tense anticipation,
John Seytabla, TRS-80 fan

**It's always interesting to discover how our readers got into games, and what drove them to love the hobby. We're fully aware that there is interest in the TRS-80, and we're certainly aiming to get it into the mag as quickly as possible. We'll try to make it happen before issue 100.**

## WHO NEEDS SID?

**Dear Retro Gamer,**

I'd like to know if you're ever planning on writing anything about the sound chip on the Spectrum 128K. There are often references about the excellent music of the C64, but the Spectrum always goes unnoticed. I know that the C64 had a great sound chip and that the Speccy's was nowhere near as good, but things were quite different on the 128K model.

With this in mind, please could you think about publishing the following features: an article about the Spectrum 128K's sound chip and the great music it was able to produce, and a feature on the differences between 48K and 128K Spectrum games. The latter would be particularly interesting, because it would also double up as a buyer's guide for those looking to start collecting on the 128K machine.
James Coe

**Thanks for the letter, James, and you're right – the Spectrum 128K does need more coverage in the magazine. We have two resident Speccy experts, Martyn Carroll and Richard Burton, so I'm sure they'd be interested in fleshing out your two great feature ideas. Coincidentally, the pair have just collaborated on a Spectrum Collector's Guide in this very issue. You can find it on page 58.**

## YOU LACK DISCIPLINE

**Dear Retro Gamer,**

With all this talk I hear about the VIC-20 and its usefulness or lack thereof, I'd like to share how I choose to remember the (once) apple of Jack Tramiel's eye. When my child misbehaves, for instance, I like to reprimand him sternly, with nothing other than a good ol' lusty swipe of the hallowed VIC (power pack optional, depending on the severity of the misdemeanour). It does the trick and quiets the boy down, and also makes a wonderful, hearty sound, which brings back such wistful memories of hazy-screened pixelated days filled with classics such as *Radar Rat Race* and *Arcadia*. And when my wife doesn't serve me dinner on time, once again out comes the breadbox, and as I deliver the just punishment I fondly and tearfully yearn for days of *Jetpac* and Imagine cassette releases.

In fact, I feel that this will become a family tradition and indeed my son, seeing me raise the VIC to the cat to learn it some manners, has even started following suit on Randy, our dog. I hope that someday he too will continue to let the VIC-20 live on in similar vein, and let it never die as some heartless bastards so very much desire it to.

> "What's the deal with all the love for Radiant Silvergun?"

## RETROBATE PROFILE



| | |
|---|---|
| Name: | Robert Dunning |
| Joined: | 29 October 2010 |
| Location: | Redcar, United Kingdom |
| Occupation: | Production Technician |
| Website: | Not given |
| Fave Games System: | Sega Model 2 |



>> Reader Rob is a staunch defender of the VIC-20. Who else wants to join his campaign?

# * BEAT THE TEAM

Think you're good at retro games? See if you can beat the staff at some of their favourite titles



High Score: 33,200



**DARRAN**

**CHOSEN GAME:** ROLLING THUNDER 2

**Why I picked it:** I have fond memories of playing it on my Mega Drive back in the day.

**Handy tip:** Conserve as many bullets as you can, as you'll be given a hefty bonus for every one that you don't use.



High Score: 55,690



**STUART**

**CHOSEN GAME:** PANG

**Why I picked it:** After playing so much *Bubble Bobble*, I released some tension with some bubble skewering.

**Handy tip:** Try to perfect the art of the three-shot juggle: killing half the bubbles released by one bubble while strafing in one direction.



High Score: 73,830



**DAVID**

**CHOSEN GAME:** PINBALL MAGIC

**Why I picked it:** Although I haven't played this for a while, the last time I gave it a bash I managed to squeeze 73,830 out of it.

**Handy tip:** Keep an eye on the ball and don't forget to breathe at all times.

# From the forum

» To have your say visit www.retrogamer.net/forum

**Every month, Retro Gamer asks a question on the forum and prints the best replies. This month we wanted to know…**

## What's your favourite Spectrum game?

**Joey** Only experienced the Spectrum on the iPad app so from that I'd say *Saboteur.*

**forestville** *Where Time Stood Still* is a clear favourite, with *Operation Wolf* and *Cybernoid 2* not far behind.

**Smurph** If you'd asked me a year ago, I'd have answered *Auf Wiedersehen Monty* without a doubt. I'm torn, though, since about a year ago *Splat!* came up in the Retroleague, and it reminded me of a game I'd forgotten and barely played. I got so into it again having not played it a huge amount back in the day, and it's bloody fantastic.

**AmigaJay** Probably played *Emlyn Hughes International Soccer* the most so I'll plump for that, bugs and all!

**Matt_B** This week I'll go for… *Chaos.* A brilliantly designed, if somewhat unfinished, game that's very easy to pick up, yet not lacking in depth. You've just got to love giant gooey blobs, first round lightning bolts, and illusory dragons – well, unless you're on the receiving end of them. Mainly, though, it's progressively more fun with the more players who take part.

**lanky316** *The Hobbit.* That game led to me getting the book and as a result helped begin my love of reading.

**JetSetWilly** Oh, bloody hell, there's so many! Do I choose *Chase HQ, Escape From The Planet Of The Robot Monsters, Magicland Dizzy* or *3D Deathchase*?

*EFTPOTRM.* No, wait, *Chase HQ.* No, wait…

**Jonathan** *Halls Of The Things* is not just my favourite Spectrum game; it is my favourite game of all time, on any platform. Released in 1983, it had horrendous controls, awful graphics and no sound at all, yet it was still amazing. Gameplay distilled to its purest form.

**Jagfest_UK** Pretty hard one to answer but I just can't look past *Back To Skool. Skool Daze* was just wonderful and so original but its sequel just took the game that little bit further. It's a crying shame no more sequels were made.

**boggyb** Never had a Speccy, but I played *Match Day II* to death on my mate's so I'll choose that. *Head Over Heels* or *Knight Lore* a close second.

**Confessor** Just one? Impossible! I'd say *Highway Encounter, Atic Atac, The Hobbit, 3D Starstrike*…

**Szczepaniak** *Rex* was ace; a really good run-and-gun. Otherwise *The Sacred Armour Of Antiriad* for me. It's like *Metroid*, on the humble Spectrum! Admittedly it was available on several systems, but the Speccy version had a very clean aesthetic compared to the other versions. And who doesn't like *Metroid*-styled games?

**Seadog74** *Starglider* amazed me on the Speccy so I had to get the CPC version.

**mike_nz** *Skool Daze* was certainly a highlight for me on the Speccy. I used to make fun of Spectrum owners with their inferior-looking games back in the day, being a C64 user myself.

Then one day I actually started playing on a real Spectrum and discovered a few real gems that I had never played on my C64. *Skool Daze* was probably my favourite then and I still love it today.

**HalcyonDaze00** The original *Renegade.* Second only to *Double Dragon* as the best side-scrolling beat-'em-up.

**markopoloman** *Jet Set Willy.* Something about *JSW* on the Speccy just feels right. The sound is perfect and the colour clash spot on!

**DeadZoo** Oooh… I feel dirty even answering that question, being a Commodore kid and all, but I'd say *Chase HQ*, as it was a fantastic conversion, and the C64 one was, well… pants!

**Mire Mare** *Chase HQ II: Special Criminal Investigation* still manages to amaze me when I see it. One of the best arcade conversions for the Speccy, and it's more fun than the arcade original.

**DigitalDuck** It's always going to be *Elite.* Way ahead of its time, and still very playable and fun.

**ipmarks** I don't care about being obvious because *Jet Set Willy* WAS my favourite Spectrum game, and still is. I played it to death in the Eighties, and I still play it today on emulator and iPhone. In fact, I'd say it is probably my favourite game ever, on any system.

## YOUR OPINION PLEASE

### IMPRESSING PARENTS

**jdanddiet** I remember when I first played *Metal Gear Solid* on the PS and showed the old man the stealth elements, using the binoculars outside the base, sneaking around. He was quite impressed as it was different from the usual shoot shoot shoot.

**Cthulhu** My father is not really the gaming type; he's already 61. However, I do remember him being addicted to a game called *Pinball Fantasies*, about 15 years ago.

**Gunstar Hero** I remember my mum finding *Duke Nukem 3D* amusing when she had a go on our first ever PC. She also loved listening to the Chemical Plant theme whenever me or my brother played *Sonic 2.*

**DigitalDuck** My dad's the best *Jetpac* player I know. Mind you, I only personally know two other people who have played *Jetpac*, and one of them is me.

### MAX PAYNE

**Katzkatz** Anyone a fan of this game? I played both on the PC. At first I did think that the game was a bit overrated by the magazines. Although, I can see the novelty of having a third-person perspective shooter on the PC or system of your choosing.

**greenberet79** I liked it generally. I remember buying it the week it came out at full price. It was good, and the atmosphere was enjoyable. But some of the controls let it down, I thought, especially when you were in a tight spot or against the clock.

**Korpoi** Love it, well paced, not so actiony all the time. 3D Realms combined with Finnish developer; bound to be gritty and dark. I'm not sure if the third will have the same vibe based on the trailer.

### CROCODILES

**resident paul** I know there was the *Croc* game series on the PlayStation and a giant crocodile in *Resident Evil 2*, and there's one in *Frogger.* I wonder if any other videogames have crocodiles in them.

**ShadowMan** *Metal Gear Solid 3* has its share of crocs in the jungle.

**DreamcastRIP** Do alligators count too?

**nakamura** *Donkey Kong Country* had croc heads you could jump from and use as a springboard.

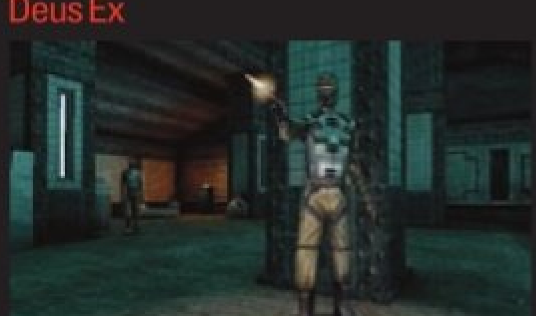
**Pixiu** There's an alligator in the sewers in *Last Ninja 2.* And huuuuuge crocs in *Resident Evil 5.*

**Gibberish Driftwood** In *King's Quest* there are crocs swimming around in the castle's moat. Be careful you don't fall in the water or you'll get eaten.

## OLD vs NEW

Each month, we'll be finding out if the classics are better than their successors. This month, which *Deus Ex* game is the best?

Deus Ex | Deus Ex: Human Revolution





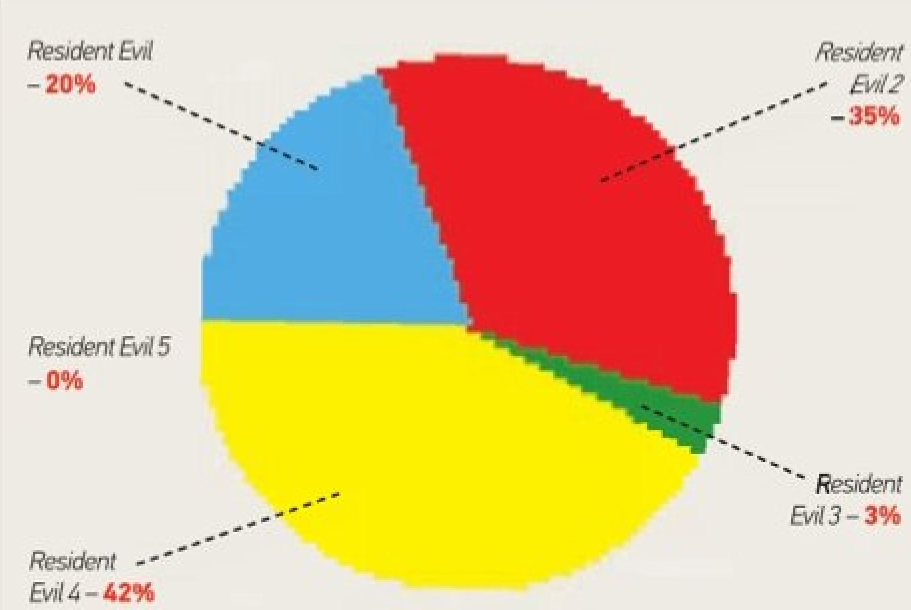
50% | 50%

**Cycle** The third is a worthy successor, but it's still missing a lot of what made the first amazing.

**Kai** The first one was great but I like the new one even better.

## HOT TOPIC

### Best Resident Evil




"I've gone with *RE2*. It was the one I enjoyed most at the time. I loved *4*, but it was too scary!"
**– greenberet79**

"As much as I love the cheesiness of the original, I would have to vote for *Resident Evil 2*. Only ever played as Claire, though; never actually got round to doing a run through as Leon."
**– Rinoa**

I have never got more productivity out of Jack's earliest beige classic, and I think it's a shame more people don't follow suit and also teach their family the true meaning of 'nostalgia'.

Please, guys, unify and join with me in my earnest campaign.

Rob, defender of the VIC

**We don't condone the use of a VIC-20 as a weapon. An original Xbox would do far more damage. Are you sure you're not suffering from pent-up rage from actually owning a VIC-20?**

## FAR FROM BOARD

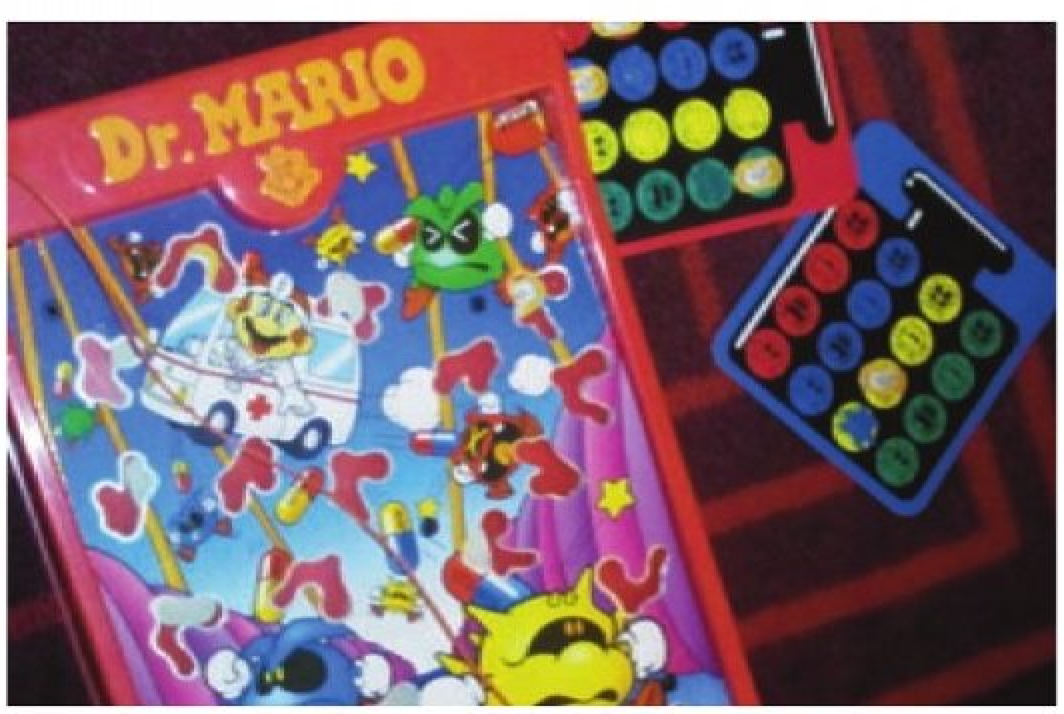
**Dear Retro Gamer,**

I just wanted to drop you a line to say how much I enjoyed your feature on videogame board games. They are a little-known spin-off from the games themselves and mostly good fun to boot. I frequent car boots and recently picked up the *Frogger* game for just £2. Bargain.

I know it's not MB, but have you heard of this *Dr Mario* game? It was another car boot special – slightly pricier at £4 – and is a novel twist on *Operation*. I will warn you, though: it is insanely loud!

Happy retro hunting,

Chris Thorpe, Doncaster




As you can see, the *Dr Mario* board game does share similarities with the videogame original. Kind of…

"He'd used gaffer tape to secure me in the seat and force-fed me boiled eggs"

### DISCUSSED THIS MONTH

**Issue 100**

**It's getting closer and closer to issue 100 and the weight of expectation is heavy in the air. Battle plans have been drawn, interviewees are getting chased and cover options are being discussed on a daily basis. Kate is hoping that she doesn't have to design another 100 covers like she did on *games™*, while Stuart is beavering away with his usual diligence and sniffing out big interviews. Darran, on the other hand, simply wants to do a *Leisure Suit Larry* and skip from issue 99 to 101. He's not going to get his way…**

**Glad to hear you enjoyed the feature, Chris. We've had a lot of positive feedback about it, so maybe we'll revisit other games at a later date. There's certainly enough of them available. And that's a great price on *Frogger* – Darran's cost him £20!**

## THE MATT FACTOR

**Dear Retro Gamer,**

After recent letters about a certain someone called Matthew making life miserable, I thought it was time to come forward and reveal my own encounter with a man called Matthew. I was on a train from Sidcup to Lysnoweth with a bag of retro goodies – an Amstrad GX4000 and games – when I met Matthew in an otherwise deserted carriage. Being the friendly sort, I started a conversation with him, and revealed my bag of goodies. I then decided to doze off for a nap and asked him to watch the bag, which he agreed to.

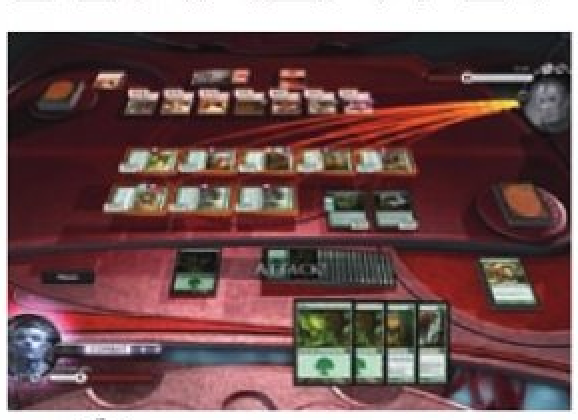
When I woke up he'd used gaffer tape to secure me in the seat, whereupon he proceeded to force-feed me several dozen boiled eggs until I was sick. I pleaded with him to stop but he kept saying my games "weren't proper retro". Worse still, when I started bringing the eggs up he held my bag of stuff up as a sick bag. I tried closing my mouth but eggs still shot out my nose into the bag, ruining my beloved Amstrad. He just laughed and then got off the train, which is when I realised the bastard had also taken my shoes. When I got home I cried all night and my mum warned me: never trust a boy called Matthew.

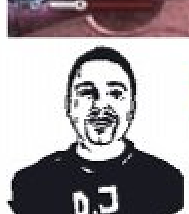
Sincerely

Chadley Brunswick

**That's a truly traumatic experience; we hope you've been able to recover. We've not heard from Mr Lightbourne for a while now. Maybe he's lost interest and is terrorising another publication.**

## CURRENTLY PLAYING

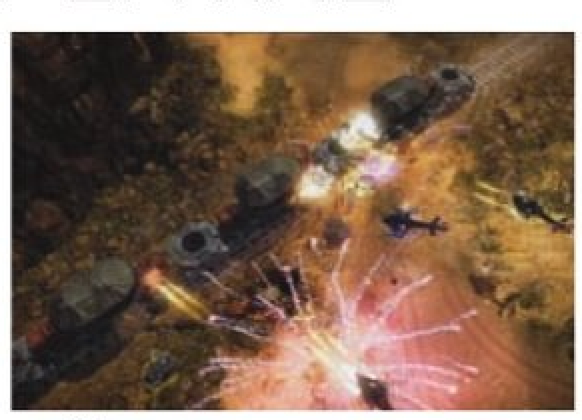





### DARRAN

**Magic 2012**

While I prefer the PC version of *Magic: The Gathering*, *Magic 2012* makes a great first taste of the game for new players. It's also extremely satisfying continually crushing occasional freelancer Mike Tooley.






### STUART

**Renegade Ops**

Currently my evenings are being spent playing through *Renegade Ops*. A polished, rip-roaring twin-stick shooter with some inventive twists, it feels like a loving homage to classic arcade shooters of yesteryear.






### DAVID

**Uncharted 3**

Okay, I'm not actually playing Nathan Drake's new game yet, but I am watching lots of videos. I'm really looking forward to playing this game and am desperately hoping that it will be the same quality as the first two.


retro GAMER

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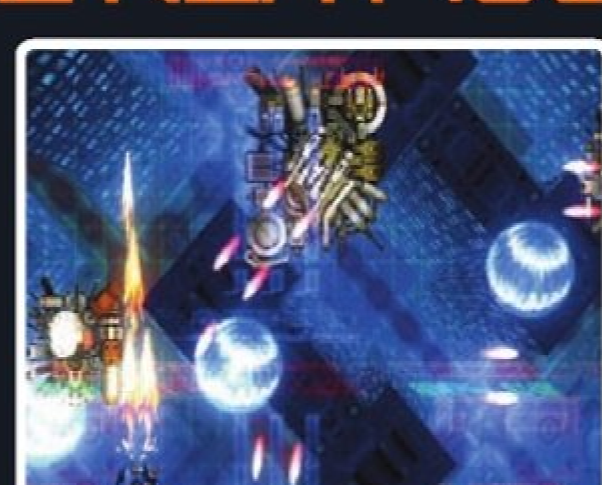



## ALSO IN THE NEXT ISSUE



### Monty Mole

■ After a long hibernation, Peter Harrap comes out of hiding to discuss the origins of everyone's favourite 8-bit mole



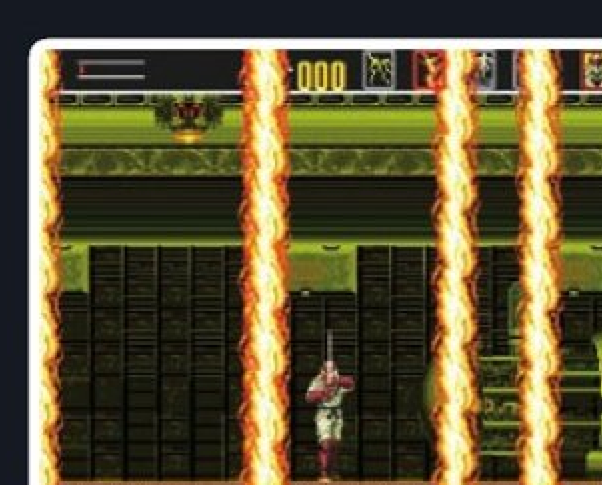
### Radiant Silvergun

■ In an exclusive interview, Masato Maegawa reveals the creation of Treasure's acclaimed shoot-'em-up



### Jetpac

■ Members of Rare look back at Ultimate's first ever hero, Jetman, and his short but memorable four-game legacy



### The Revenge Of Shinobi

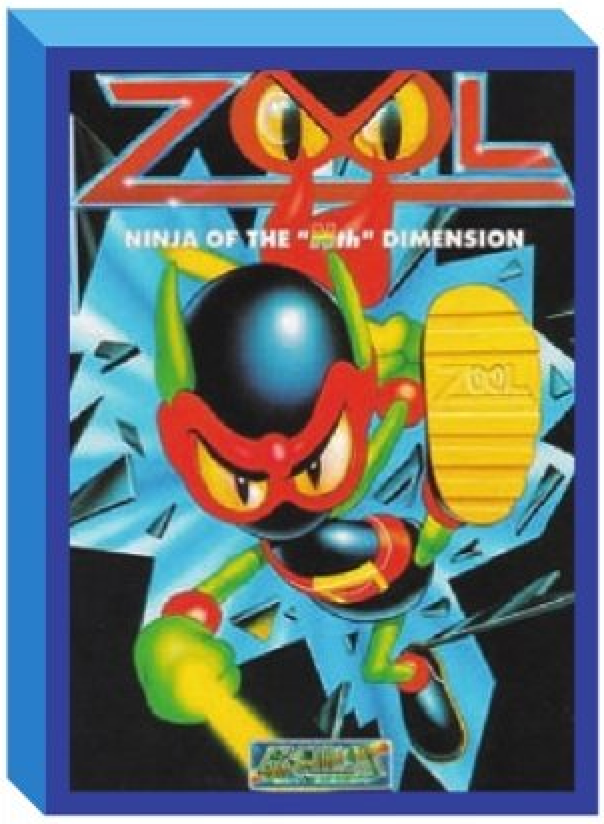
■ Noriyoshi Ohba on the creation of the hit ninja sequel and how it became one of the Mega Drive's essential games


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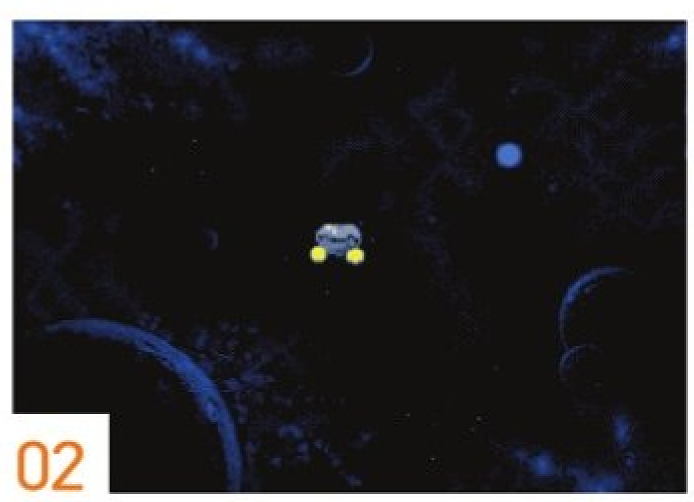

## ZOOL

» Despite many people thinking at the time that Zool was an ant, it turns out he is actually an intergalactic ninja gremlin. Hailing from the Nth Dimension, during a trip home after a 'heavy night ninja-ing' Zool's spaceship gets sucked into a strange vortex. Upon waking, he receives a telegram informing him that in order to get home he must beat six challenges across six worlds.



01

» Few final bosses are as bizarre as the one that closes *Zool*. A demented, boxing glove-launching clown with one large eyeball hanging in the air like an antenna and another jutting from its mouth, it's the stuff of cheese-fuelled nightmares.



02

» After defeating the clown thing, Zool completes his final challenge. During the journey home he decides to ignore any more strange vortexes in space. Despite the fact that it goes against the code of the intergalactic ninja, it's probably best.



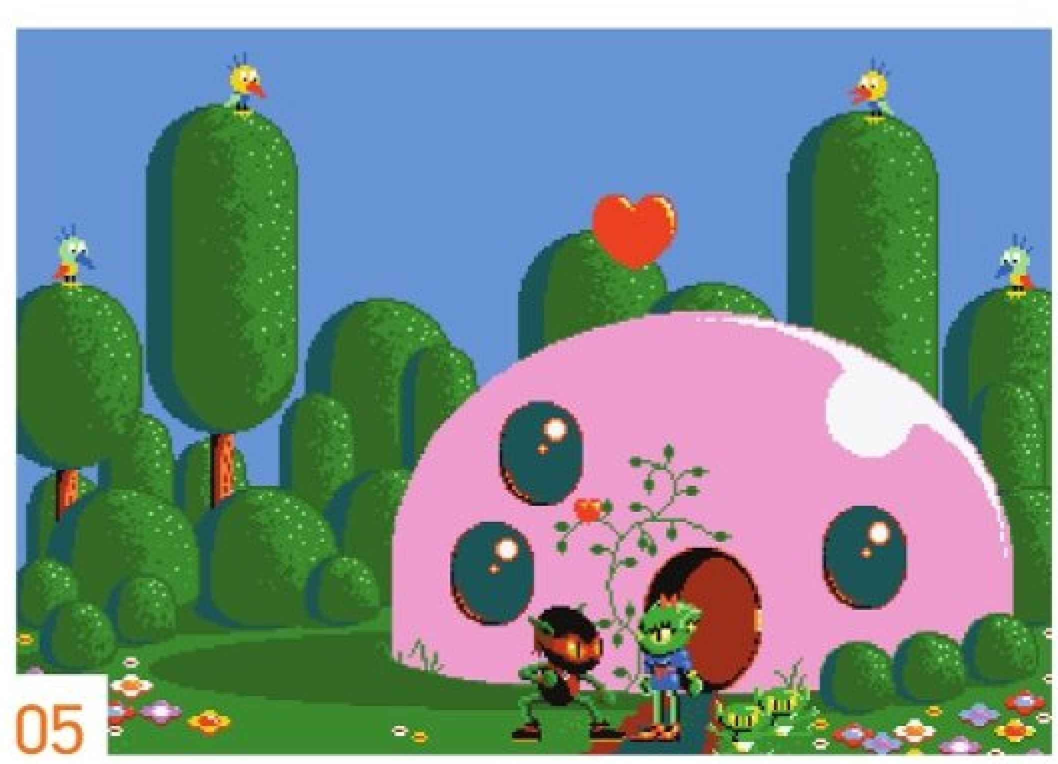
03

» Zool reaches the Nth Dimension, an eye-searing place designed by famous fictional architect Ronald Cartwright, whose design work can also be seen in the *Teletubbies*, Kinder Egg toy capsules and the Sega shooter *Fantasy Zone*.



04

» Zool finally arrives home to his wife and kids. However, before he can jump into her arms, Zool has one last mission to complete: punt a poor defenceless blue hedgehog wearing red sneakers – an unsubtle dig at a certain Sega mascot.



05

» With that last little job out of the way, *Zool* concludes in the traditional end-screen manner, our hero standing beside his loved ones while a big red love heart floats above their heads. An obvious finale, perhaps, but sometimes the old ones are the best.


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